

MS Coll.

THE FIRST METHODIST REFORMER;

OR,

A TRUE ESTIMATE OF THE REV. ALEXANDER KILHAM
AND HIS PRINCIPLES.

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DISCUSSION," &c. &c.

*"What I have done in regard to the Methodist Connexion, I rejoice
in at this moment. . . . O, that I had done it more faithfully!"—*
Mr. KILHAM'S Dying Declaration.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is a stern reality in truth and virtue, which time and circumstance cannot change, and an excellence which neither the tongue of calumny, nor the arm of despotic power, can destroy. They are imperishable and immutable, like the Divine source from which they spring. For a time, ignorance may conceal their lustre, slander may caricature them under odious designations, and tyranny may resist their influence; but though their ascendancy may be delayed, it cannot be ultimately prevented. As the diamond acquires brightness by friction, so their intrinsic excellence becomes revealed by investigation, and the day of investigation will come. There is a sort of retribution which Providence evinces on behalf of principles as well as individuals, by which he brings forth "their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day." As certainly as the morning light succeeds the midnight gloom, the day of misrepresentation is followed by the day of vindication; the calumnious crimination of one age, by the just views and virtuous indignation of another. How often has banished truth emerged from her prison, and evinced her immortality, while her foes have been mouldering in the dust! How often have virtuous and holy principles survived imperial wrath and popular hate, and lived to be revered and honoured by a generation which has blushed for the ignorance and injustice of a bygone age! The haughty tyrant, whose power might annihilate a nation, cannot blot out a truth nor extirpate a principle. Though trampled under foot, yet, like trodden seed, they will spring again. They have an indestructible element of reviviscence, a perpetually germinating principle which resists all antagonistic influences, and prognosticates an era when they shall flourish and universally prevail. In the reformation from Popery—in the sufferings and triumphs of Nonconformity—in the emancipation of the slave—in the arduous but successful struggles of the Free Church of Scotland, and in the progress of public opinion generally, we have some striking illustrations of the vital energy of truth, and the resistless power of principle.

The history of the past inspires hope for the future. Our faith in Providence induces the expectation that society is destined to progress in the acquisition and appreciation of truth, justice, and freedom. This result, indeed, is linked to that successful diffusion of the gospel which

is so clearly foretold. It is well, therefore, to have our sentiments in harmony with the destined progression of mankind; for, without this, the mind cannot realize peace and satisfaction. The lover of darkness will tremble as he sees the advancing light, and the abettor of despotism will quail as he beholds the principles of freedom gaining ground; and the progress of society will assuredly leave him behind, to sigh over the wreck of antiquated theories, and the defeat of his selfish schemes. To be in such a position is humiliating as it is painful; but the effect is inseparable from the cause. There is no safety but in truth, and there is no satisfaction but in the love of it. In the love of truth and freedom, the mind is fortified against the assaults of reproach and slander, and consoled under delayed justice and disastrous events. It cannot but cling to that which, like itself, is essentially vital and imperishable; it can bear to suffer for that which has so much intrinsic excellence; and it can afford to wait for a triumph which is infallibly certain to arrive.

How far the reader may consider these general remarks applicable to the subject we have in hand, will depend upon the harmony or difference between his views and our own. As a religious community, we think that in past years we have laboured under no small disadvantage, from prevalent misconception of our principles and our founders, especially in reference to that upright and devoted man, the Rev. Alexander Kilham, the first who moved in the cause of Methodistic reform. During our history, we have shared, in some respects, the portion of our dissenting brethren in the early period of their existence. From physical torture and legal penalties, we have indeed been happily exempt; but for many years the tongue of slander was seldom silent, and the pen, pointed with keen irony and bitter sarcasm, was often employed against us by our more powerful opponents. Indeed, seeing that a good name, if applied to the Methodist reformers of 1797, must have the effect of propagating their sentiments on ecclesiastical freedom, the inducement to withhold it was too powerful to be resisted, except where motives the most refined and unearthly had complete ascendancy. The times, too, were unpropitious to us; public opinion was not ripe to estimate our principles, and scarcely to give credit to our motives. The era which preceded the reform in Parliament, and the emancipation of the slave, and openly defended abuses which statesmen now blush to avow, was not the one to favour a popular system of church government, or to do justice to its founders and promoters. Under these discouragements our fathers laboured in hope, sustained by the consciousness of personal integrity—by the conviction that their principles, though in advance of the age, were based in eternal truth and justice, and must ultimately prevail.

Another age has arrived, in which the human mind is awake, and asserts its freedom to think and investigate—an age in which the prestige of antiquity, and the dictum of human authority, are held at their proper value; and men are resolved to examine facts and test principles by the standard of truth. Before such a tribunal we are not unwilling to appear, and court an impartial investigation. An age which has retrieved the memory of Cromwell from the mendacious obloquy of a time-serving and sychophantic generation, and done justice to the virtues of that

great man, is prepared, we think, to give an impartial verdict respecting the injured memory of the Rev. Alexander Kilham, and rightly to estimate his principles.

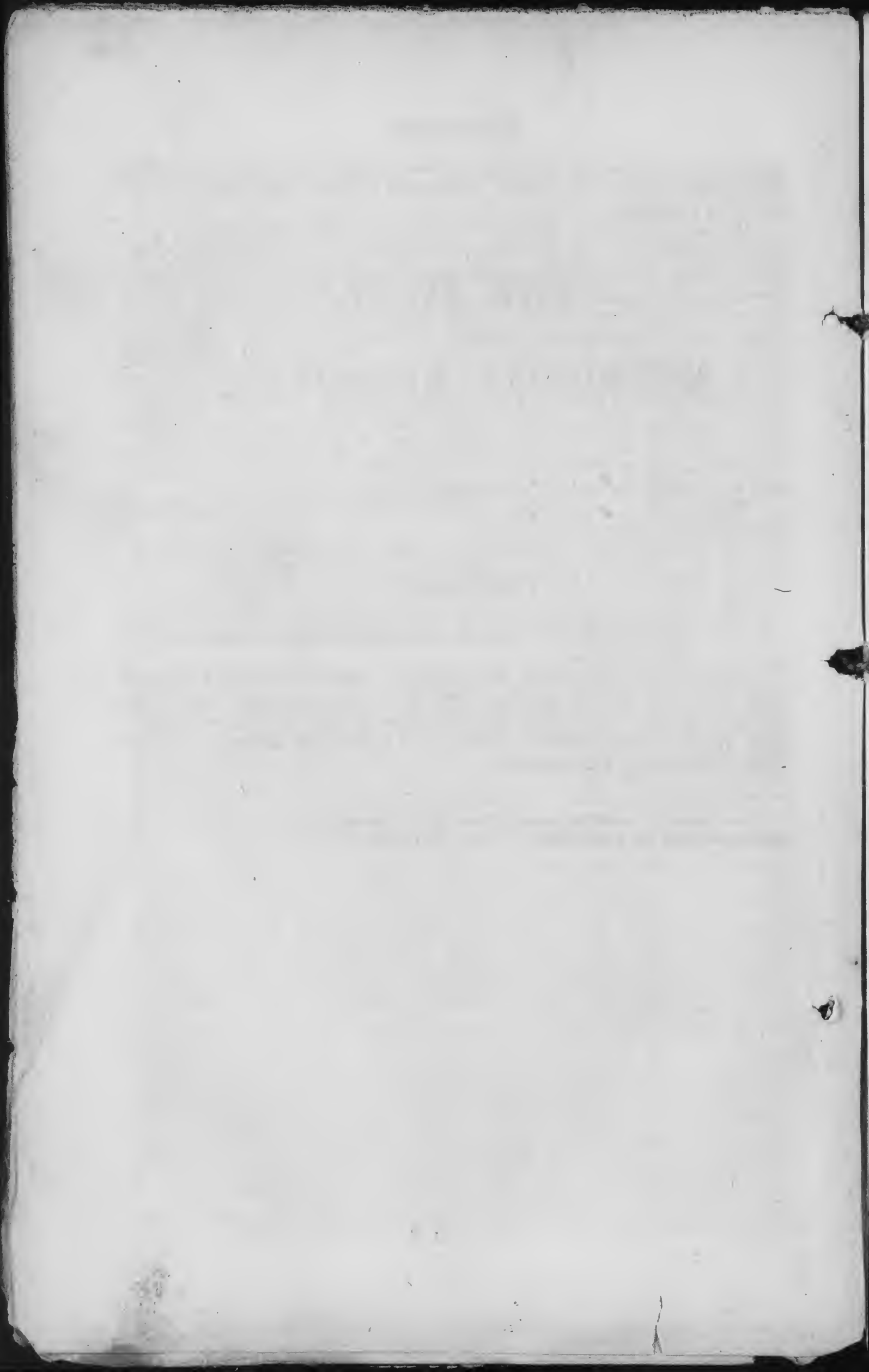
We have no wish to stir up the embers of strife, nor even to provoke a controversy with any religious community. On the contrary, we feel it a duty to cherish the sentiments of peace and love in our bosoms towards all the members of Christ's church. We shall, therefore, eschew the unworthy practice which a public journalist has recently adopted,—that of raking together the offensive epithets which, a generation ago, were cast upon the founders of our body.* Let them lie undisturbed on the obsolete pages of their authors, and with all the animosities of that generation let them sink into eternal oblivion. We shall not, however, compromise the truth. Justice must be rendered to departed worth; and the minds of the living must be disabused of false estimates, grounded on misrepresentation. To this end, the truth must be plainly and intelligibly spoken, though uttered in love.

Within the narrow limits assigned to this work, our remarks must be comprised within four chapters.

- I. We shall take a brief survey of Mr. Kilham's Personal History
- II. Examine the predominant elements in his Character;
- III. Take a view of the principles involved in his Controversy;
- IV. Endeavour to form a correct estimate of the nature and importance of these principles, especially the principle of Lay Representation.

Within the compass thus prescribed, we hope to furnish such facts and arguments as are necessary to our present purpose; and those readers who may desire more ample and specific information, we respectfully refer to our Jubilee volume, the "Life of Mr. Kilham," and our other connexional publications.

* We refer to the *Watchman*, whose recent assaults upon the memory of Mr. Kilham induced the determination to issue the present work.



THE FIRST METHODIST REFORMER.

CHAPTER I.

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE REV. A. KILHAM'S PERSONAL HISTORY.

MR. KILHAM was born on the 10th of July, 1762, and it is a coincidence, unimportant with regard to the character of the man, yet claiming a passing notice in their history, that the illustrious originator of Methodism, and its honest-hearted reformer, first drew breath in the same town—Epworth, in Lincolnshire. Mr. Kilham's parents were both pious members of the Wesleyan Society; and their house was frequented by the Methodist preachers. Alexander had thus the advantage of a religious education; and at an early period the truths inculcated made a deep impression on his mind. The pious efforts of his parents were sustained by the earnest appeals of the ministry, by the spiritual conversation of the devoted men who found a welcome under his father's roof, and by the personal expostulations and entreaties they addressed to his tender conscience. These means, accompanied by the influence of the Holy Spirit, produced a keen sense of the evil and danger of sin, and excited such desires for salvation, as led him occasionally to seek retirement, where he poured out his soul in prayer, and formed resolutions to devote himself to God.

These impressions, however, did not, for several years, issue in sound conversion. The natural alienation of the heart was not yet overcome; and, until his eighteenth year, the antagonistic influences of nature and grace caused many a painful conflict in his bosom. His private journal records sorrowful confessions of the ascendancy of evil passions, engendering disobedience to parents, the profanation of the sabbath, and other wicked practices common to ungodly youth, which inflicted grief upon the minds of his parents, and often excited in his own bosom a state of anguish too intense and poignant for language to describe. He found, by painful experience, that the "way of transgressors is hard."

Various events combined to stimulate his conscience, and keep his convictions awake, until, when nearing his eighteenth year, a revival of religion occurred at Epworth, in which his three brothers, a sister-in-law, and several of his associates were brought to God; and shortly after, his own rebellious heart fully and finally yielded to the power of divine grace. His conversion was decided; and his experience of the divine favour clear and powerful. The happy change he beheld in others contributed to give an evangelical clearness to his views, and a well-defined character to his own attainments of salvation. When he first heard his former associates in sin bear their personal testimony to the joys of pardon and the favour of God, he was filled with astonishment; but his wonder soon gave way to overwhelming anxiety to realize the same blessing for himself. As a vile and condemned sinner he fell prostrate before the mercy seat, and, being directed to cast his guilty soul upon the atoning Saviour, he did so, and found peace and joy in believing. This important transition in the history of young Kilham took place at a meeting, where a number of pious people were convened for prayer and religious worship. Let this solemn and interesting event be described in his own words:—"I was so much condemned and accused by my conscience, that I thought myself the worst of sinners. My companions surrounded me, speaking of the wonderful dealings of God with their own souls, and told me that the Lord would speedily deliver my soul, if I would return to him. I was astonished to see the change that was in them. My heart, or rather I may say the Spirit of God, smote me, and I could not refrain from weeping. There were several others also in great distress, who appeared more affected than I was. When the meeting had continued about an hour, I could not help weeping aloud as well as they. Our friends prayed with us; some of them exhorted us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, while others were praying alone for our deliverance. I continued two or three hours weeping without comfort, finding myself so exceedingly sinful. Sometimes my heart was broken down, so that tears flowed plentifully; at other seasons I was so hard and stupid that I could not weep. After I had remained thus for three or four hours, I found a sudden change in my mind. I could not have wept if I might have had the world for it; but I found a great love to every one around me, and my heart was filled with unspeakable joy. I did not know what passed in me, only that my heart was changed from mourning to rejoicing. My friends rejoiced over me, exhorting me to cast myself on the mercy of God; they warned me of Satan's devices, assuring me that he would endeavour to ensnare me with doubts and fears. I returned to my father's house, where we rejoiced together for what God had done for our souls, and endeavoured to persuade all we saw to seek the same happiness;—for the change, I found, was attended with a desire that all might experience the same. This led me to search the scriptures, that I might be able to persuade others to flee from the wrath to come. I had some temptations, and sometimes fears lest I should have deceived myself; but the Lord again shined upon my soul, and my doubts were gone. My peace returned with a love to God and to all mankind, such as I had never known before."

Being now made a new creature, inspired with new sentiments, new

principles and affections, henceforth his life and conversation were new also; and the clearness which marked his introduction to religious enjoyment, gave decision and energetic tone to the whole of his Christian career. He was no trifler, but thoroughly earnest and devoted. He loved the means of grace, and his feet cheerfully and steadily ran in the way of God's commandments; and, so far as we have ascertained, he ran on, without wearying or retreating, to the happy and triumphant termination of his religious course.

Experimental religion is spontaneously progressive. It needs not acts of Parliament to promote its diffusion. It generates an inherent impulse, which stimulates its propagation. Its happy recipient becomes happier still in causing others to realize its blessings. His heart glows with benevolent emotion, and his bowels yearn with tender sympathy. The love of Christ constrains him; and to glorify him in the salvation of souls, becomes the delight and element of his being. Thus was the ardent mind of young Kilham impelled to exertion; and while the genius of Methodism welcomed his aspirations for doing good, its elastic and admirable machinery was well fitted to his powers of action. His first efforts were put forth in assisting to conduct meetings for prayer and exhortation in the surrounding villages,—an exercise such as that which engaged the zeal of the youthful Adam Clarke soon after his heart had been warmed with a Saviour's love. "Five or six of us," says Alexander Kilham, "were desirous of spreading the knowledge and love of Christ, and for that purpose we formed a plan of holding meetings for prayer and exhortation in the neighbouring villages. The power of God was present with us; many were constrained to cry for mercy, and there was a glorious prospect of sinners being brought to God. Thus the Lord owned our endeavours; and his name becoming exceedingly precious to many, numbers were added to our society. However, some turned back again into their former ways of sin and vanity, and I had much sorrow on their account. I endeavoured earnestly to reclaim them, but in several cases all my attempts proved unsuccessful. Our company that attended the villages now became very small, and at last was reduced to myself and another young man, who had been in the society some years. But we still endeavoured to keep up the meetings we had begun, and the Lord blessed these to our own souls, and made them useful to others. Several friends advised us to desist from our attempts to support our meetings, and we had much exercise and trouble in our minds on that account. One Saturday evening, as we were going into the country, we had great uneasiness because of the many discouragements which were before us; and after much conversation and reasoning, and having prayed earnestly to the Lord on the subject, we seemed to rest much on the tokens we should have from God of his approbation of our conduct on the approaching sabbath. The Lord was pleased to bless us by pouring out his Spirit upon us; several were led to cry to him for mercy. Three, in particular, were brought to close in with the overtures of mercy; they became members of our society, and I hope happy partakers of the love of God. Our hands were lifted up like the hands of Moses, and we returned blessing and praising the God of our salvation, being resolved, by

divine help, to continue to declare to all that would attend our meeting, that Jesus Christ was the only way of salvation." Such decision and conscientious earnestness in the pursuit of a right object, despite of all discouragements, discovers an element which was always predominant in Mr. Kilham's character, and was the foundation of the many excellences which distinguished his life.

Soon after this devoted youth had given his heart to God, and his hand to God's people, his mind turned towards the holy ministry, and he received an impression that in due time God would call him to that important work. Jealous, however, lest he should run before he was sent, or mistake his own desires for the intimations of God's will, he anxiously scrutinized his motives, and earnestly sought direction from above. He observes,—“I spent much time in praying that the Lord would make my way plain before me, promising that whatever he called me unto, to obey his voice, and follow him whithersoever he would have me, though it were to prison or death. I frequently had passages of scripture impressed upon my mind, such as, ‘Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine;’ ‘Let no man despise thy youth;’ ‘Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God;’ ‘A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me, and woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.’ These and many other such passages induced me to cherish the thought of being engaged in the ministry. Several of my friends, and two of the preachers in particular, said they believed God had designed me to labour in his vineyard. At my first setting out in prayer and exhortation, my zeal was not according to knowledge. I then did and said many things which a maturer judgment caused me to regret; but the Lord overlooked them with a pitying eye, and continued to bless my soul with peace and joy, and caused my heart to overflow with love to perishing sinners.

“I went out with much fear and trembling, and preached my first time at Luddington; the Lord opened my mouth and gave me favour in the sight of the people, so that I found encouragement to proceed, for he was pleased to own my labours, by making me useful to the people and happy in my own mind.”

From this time Mr. Kilham continued to exercise his talents in preaching, as frequently as his health and opportunities would admit, and his labours, joined with his consistent and devoted character, secured for him general esteem. When he reached the age of twenty-one, his way was providentially opened to a sphere of more extensive usefulness. Robert Carr Brackenbury, Esq., of Raithby Hall, near Spilsby, Lincolnshire, a gentleman of intelligence and earnest piety, who employed his time and property in spreading the gospel, was desirous of a pious young man to travel with him as an assistant in his arduous labours; and, being on a visit to Epworth, he had an interview with Mr. Kilham, which resulted in a connexion such as proved mutually satisfactory. The capacity in which Mr. Kilham stood to Mr. Brackenbury, was like that in which Mr. Bradford stood to Mr. Wesley. He journeyed with him from place to place; assisted him in conducting

religious services; and preached and laboured generally under his direction, like Timothy with Paul. "As a son with a father, he served with him in the gospel."

In this situation, Mr. Kilham had more ample opportunities for the cultivation of his mind, which, it appears, he eagerly embraced. His intercourse with Mr. Brackenbury opened out to him the diversified fields into which, as yet, he had scarcely entered; and, though at first discouraged by the view he now had of the scanty information he possessed, he was roused to put forth his energies for mental improvement, as an important requisite for public usefulness. He thus records his gratitude to God, his happiness in his new situation, and his determination to improve it to the best of purposes:—"Blessed be the Lord for ever, for appointing me to travel with Mr. Brackenbury. I found him a blessing to me; I had assurance of the Lord's approbation respecting this undertaking. I had now great and blessed privileges put into my hands of improving myself, and was determined not to let slip the opportunities of acquiring every useful kind of knowledge. I had also many seasons for private devotion, and of much mental improvement, that I should never have had, had I continued at Epworth.

"I now became more acquainted with myself, and began to see my own ignorance; it appeared to me that I knew nothing when compared to my master: this consideration quickened me to watchfulness, and made me resolve to improve my time as much as possible. I found my master's preaching and conversation exceedingly profitable to me, and he did not disdain to instruct me how I might be acceptable in the sight of the Lord, and useful to the people. I found myself much united to him, and was thankful to the Lord for his goodness and love to such an unworthy worm."

Mr. Kilham travelled with Mr. Brackenbury in various parts of the kingdom, and to the Channel Islands, sharing with him the toils and dangers connected with the ministry at that period. At Jersey, they met with violent opposition, and were exposed to imminent peril; but God preserved his servants from personal injury, and kept their minds in serenity and peace. Mr. Kilham remarks:—

"We now began to have considerable disturbance and persecution from those that were enemies to the truth and all righteousness. This made us cry to the Lord for his aid and protection, and to look to him, who will never leave nor forsake them that trust in him.

When I walked in the streets, and saw and heard the people mocking and saying all manner of evil of me and those of our society, I was enabled to say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' I was wonderfully assisted of the Lord in preaching, and particularly in the chapel, when a part of the congregation behaved unruly, and made such a noise that I could scarcely be heard. Sometimes on these occasions I made a pause, to see if they would be silent, being scarcely able to hear my own voice. At other times they behaved so rudely (throwing stones and dirt at me while I was preaching), that I was obliged to leave off in the middle of the service. When I was preaching one Sunday, a gentleman was very outrageous, and offered money to the mob to take me to the governor's house, or to

plunge me into the water; but the Lord restrained them from injuring me. When I came out of the pulpit, he addressed me more like a fiend out of hell, than a human being. He demanded by what authority I preached, and said it was blasphemy to proceed in the manner I had done. I replied, I acted by the authority that the Lord Jesus had given me, and left him to do as he thought proper. Another gentleman took my part, and prevented him from offering me any violence.

"The mob, now finding themselves supported, as they thought, by the magistrates and gentlemen of the town, proceeded to further lengths. They came the next sabbath-day with sticks in their hands, and declared they would carry me to the water; a great number were assembled to see them take me out of the chapel and put me into a well, at a small distance from it. When I had concluded my discourse, and was beginning to sing, they made such a noise that we were prevented from proceeding. One of my friends stood at the bottom of the pulpit-steps to defend me, and to oppose any person that attempted to injure me. He took hold of my arm and led me out of the chapel, and though the mob attempted by various means to throw me down, I was supported as if by an invisible hand, and escaped from them without receiving any other injury than a few small stones that struck me. We had also in the town a considerable disturbance: when Mr. Brackenbury preached, they threw fire and gunpowder; broke the windows, and made such a noise and tumult, that the people were prevented from hearing to any advantage. Before we left the island, it pleased God to stay the madness of the people, by inclining the hearts of the Dean and others to support us, by not only not forbidding us to preach, but rather to encourage liberty of conscience.

"All the time of the persecution I found not the least fear; the Lord wonderfully supported me with a sense of his presence; I found a firm confidence and assurance that I was under his protection; that the ungodly could not proceed any further than he was pleased to permit; and that these trials should prove for my present and future advantage. I could truly say, 'The Lord is my shield and buckler, my God in whom I trust and confide. I am thine, O Lord, do as thou pleasest with thy servant; make me wholly thine for time and eternity; purify my soul, and keep me from sin, that it may not grieve me, and that I may be thine for ever.'"

Notwithstanding this opposition to the truth, their labours in the Channel Islands were not in vain. Some were convinced of their sin and danger, some found peace through the blood of the cross, and others who had backslidden were restored.

An ample opportunity having been now afforded to Mr. Brackenbury to form an estimate of Mr. Kilham's qualifications for the regular ministry, he proposed to recommend him to Mr. Wesley at the approaching Conference; but this Mr. Kilham modestly declined, being anxious, probably, to secure a further degree of mental cultivation prior to his assuming the responsibility of that important office. His patron having gone for a time to the South of France, Mr. Kilham was solicited by Mr. Dufton, the superintendent of the Grimsby Circuit, to labour there as a regular preacher. He consented to supply the circuit, which was

suffering for want of an additional labourer, but again declined to incur the responsibility of the regular ministry, being still influenced, no doubt, by a sense of his own insufficiency, and wishing to become more competent for that sacred office ere he entered fully upon its duties. These facts clearly prove that whatever decision, courage, and energy, there might be in his mental constitution, temerity and vanity were not conspicuous elements in his character. With all his love for the ministry, he was rather desirous for its qualifications, than dazzled by its honours—he was more wishful to do good, than to seem great; and such a disposition is the characteristic of a superior mind.

While Mr. Kilham was labouring in the Grimsby Circuit, he was undesignedly drawn into a theological controversy with the Rev. Edward Brackenbury, brother to the gentleman who had taken Mr. Kilham under his patronage. This individual was the incumbent of the parish, and a magistrate. Being present on one occasion when Mr. Kilham was maintaining, in his sermon, the scriptural privilege of believers enjoying an assurance of their adoption into God's family, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, he interrupted Mr. Kilham, and denied the truth of the doctrine. A discussion ensued, in which the reverend incumbent found himself and his cause placed in a very humiliating position, and he was glad to end the debate. The clergyman, however, when defeated as a minister, had recourse to his power as a magistrate, and determined to put down the preacher by legal means. He sent a threatening message, that the first preacher who should visit the town again should be taken up. The clergyman was, however, foiled in this attempt also, for Mr. Kilham availed himself of the Toleration Act, and professing to be, what in fact he really was, a Dissenter, he obtained a license, which placed him beyond the reach of his persecuting opponent, and enabled him to continue his evangelical labours for the benefit of the place. The event, too, which forced Mr. Kilham to take out a license to preach as a Dissenter, had the effect of directing his attention more specially to the grounds on which he dissented, and laid the foundation for that decided and energetic part which he subsequently took to emancipate Methodism from that subordination and serfdom to the Establishment in which Mr. Wesley unhappily left the community at his death.

In other places Mr. Kilham found his license useful. Preaching once in the open air at Alford, a clergyman interrupted him, alleging that he was breaking the law by preaching. Finding that threats had no effect upon the preacher, he sent for a constable, and required that functionary to demand Mr. Kilham's license, which being produced, he handed it over to a lawyer, who pronounced it genuine, adding that Mr. Kilham had a right to preach, and any one who hindered him was liable to be prosecuted. This decision, however, sprang from no favour to Mr. Kilham, for the lawyer immediately gave a sinister hint that though they might not personally molest the preacher, there was no law against the ringing of bells, or the beating of drums! The rabble understood the suggestion, and instantly set about procuring the aid of those instruments; but before they could set them a-going, the preacher had nearly finished, and consequently the lawyer failed in his object.

"At Spilsby, also," says Mr. Kilham, "I met with some interruption; the people were very outrageous, and threw dirt, eggs, &c., at us; but the Lord preserved me, so that I was not injured nor even hit by anything they threw. Two eggs fell upon Captain B., but he was not at all ashamed at suffering for the name of Jesus. Amongst all this tumult the Lord was present with us, and enabled me to speak with power, and to invite sinners to the Saviour of mankind."

Repeated applications were now urged upon Mr. Kilham to devote himself to the regular ministry of the word, and, after mature deliberation and prayer, he consented to offer himself to Mr. Wesley. The spirit in which he finally adopted this purpose may be gathered from the following memorandum, dated 1785:—"I am at last come to this resolution, that if God is pleased to accept of me to labour in his vineyard, I will freely offer up myself to him, that my life may be spent in his cause. I desire and pray that God would account me worthy and enable me to preach his word. I pray for gifts and grace to be useful to God and his people, and to declare his truth with boldness and simplicity of heart. I ask to be a zealous lover of Jesus and the souls that he hath purchased with his own blood. I request, O Lord, that I may so conduct myself as a minister of Christ, that my works may be approved in the day of trial, and that I may receive a reward at thy right hand for ever. Lord, hear and answer, and bless me to the joy of my soul, for the sake of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen."

Mr. Kilham's offer was accepted by Mr. Wesley, and at the following Conference he was appointed to labour in connexion with his former superintendent, Mr. Dufton, in the Horncastle Circuit. He had now assumed a new position,—the most important which can engage the powers of a human being. Mr. Kilham was alive to his responsibilities, and entered upon his official situation in the true spirit of an evangelist—anxious only to glorify God, and promote the salvation of men. The depression which a sense of his responsibilities naturally produced, gradually gave place to that cheerfulness which purity of motive, integrity of principle, and an habitual dependence on God, never fail to inspire; and on Nov. 17th of the same year, we have the following memorandum as to the state of his mind:—"At present I find my mind happy and comfortable in my situation, and am, through grace, determined to go on in the way that Providence has called me to walk in. What abundant reason have I to praise God for causing me to be kindly received in every place where I go. My soul is lost in astonishment and praise: what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits to me? How ought I to live to God, and devote my life to his service! Help me to preach thy blessed word with power, and may it reach the hearts of those who hear it: grant, most merciful God, that it may be productive of good; may it always leave a lasting impression on my audience. Oh! do thou give me grace and wisdom, that I may act aright in every place where I am sent,—that I may be a light to the people, and be made an instrument in thy hands of good to their souls. Enable me to watch and pray continually; and grant me such a measure of faith, as is necessary for one called into the vineyard. Take me now, O Lord, into thy care. I am thine, may I be thine for ever; that when thou callest me to appear

before thee, I may be found in Jesus Christ, without spot and blameless, and be admitted into thy kingdom to praise thee for ever!"

At this period, there was a considerable degree of anxiety felt and expressed by many of the preachers respecting the effects of the Deed of Declaration which Mr. Wesley had recently executed; apprehensions being entertained that it would arm one class of preachers with power to exercise an arbitrary despotism over the other. Mr. Kilham, however, did not allow these apprehensions to interfere with his spiritual duties, nor does it appear that at that time he had any idea of taking a public part in any controversy on matters of Methodist polity and discipline. He had indeed looked at the possible bearing of the Deed of Declaration, as his diary indicates; but the same record furnishes sufficient evidence that the subject had left but a feeble impression on his mind. The spiritual duties and responsibilities of his office seem to have absorbed his whole attention.

"I find my mind at present in a happy frame, and at peace with all men, and I am more than ever determined to spend my life in God's service. I purpose to preach as often as I can, to lay myself out in the blessed work of the Lord, that I may, if possible, save all the souls that hear my words. I will, by God's help, thrust myself into every place where I can gain admittance, and, as much as possible, preach the gospel in those places where the blessed sound has not been heard. I will use all my heart and strength to pluck sinners as brands from the burning. I am resolved to continue an itinerant preacher as long as my life and health continue, *provided there be no alteration after Mr. Wesley's death, that shall make it most advisable to desist.* If the world, the flesh, and the devil invite me from this glorious work, I am determined to go on in the work God hath called me unto, and continue in the same to the end of my days, if such be the will of God; and what I now write, shall remain a witness against me, if I ever deviate from my vow, unless (as above) *I have sufficient reason to the contrary.*"

Mr. Kilham passed through the labours of the year with comfort to himself and satisfaction to the people; and his ministry was blessed to the spiritual welfare of his auditors. His mind, too, while expanding in useful knowledge, was athirst for higher attainments in Christian holiness.

Mr. Kilham's next appointment, in the year 1786, was to the Gainsborough Circuit. He entered upon this sphere of labour with the same holy purpose to be useful. His journal indicates a watchful jealousy over his own heart, a steady zeal for the Divine glory, ardent pantings after personal holiness, and the salvation of precious souls. "I have found," he says, "and do find, a sincere desire to give myself afresh to God, and am determined to watch against that which most easily besets me. I desire, from my heart, that God would not suffer me to be drawn aside, and earnestly wish I may be an humble preacher, acceptable to all who hear my voice. O my God! accept a heart that pants for thee; thou knowest I would fain give myself to thee, and live to thy glory! Oh, give me grace to do it! I pray for wisdom to direct me in every respect; enlighten my understanding that I may be able to divide the word of truth aright; give me to abhor everything of affectation; and

teach me to be altogether such a one as may show forth thy glory. Make my walk and manner to be acceptable to all that hear. Grant me grace faithfully to preach thy word ; make me willing to receive instruction. Oh, give me always to eye thy glory, and make me constantly proof against all my temptations ! Let me have the grace that would preserve me from whatever would give just cause of offence to thy people. Grant me always thy Holy Spirit in preaching and prayer ; and help me truly to go forward to declare thy counsel to sinners. Give me whatever else may be to thy glory, and my present and future good, for the sake of Jesus Christ."

Mr. Kilham's zeal in the cause of God during this year, impelled him to labour far beyond his strength. Late and early, mental application and physical exertion were put forth, until his health and constitution were so seriously impaired, that he had to desist for a time ; and grave apprehensions were excited that he had stretched the bow too far for recovery. But relaxation from his official duties, combined with change of air and sea-bathing, were rendered successful in rallying his exhausted powers, and enabled him to resume his labours prior to the Conference of 1787.

His next appointment was to the Scarborough Circuit, where he continued for two years. In his journal he remarks :—"I entered upon my labours praising God for his mercies to me. I found a jealousy over myself, lest I should do anything contrary to the character I wished to maintain, and was determined to live in prayer and watchfulness, and be constantly devoted unto God. I was grieved to see so few people attend the preaching at one or two of the places in the circuit, and desire the societies to plead earnestly with God, for a display of his goodness in a revival of his work amongst them ; and I besought them, in the name of Jesus, to walk circumspectly themselves. I found myself happy amongst them, and was comforted with the hope of the work prospering, for I had great liberty in preaching, and had solemn seasons with some of the societies, and particularly at Scarborough. God blessed my coming amongst them, and gave me some seals to my ministry. I went on my way rejoicing, and met with a kind reception in every part of the circuit. The air seemed to suit my constitution ; the people were exceedingly kind and loving in most of the places, and my entertainment in general very agreeable ; for the people everywhere did all they could to make the preachers comfortable. The scene of our travelling was a little varied on the moors ; but the inconveniences we experienced from the roads were amply repaid by the kindness of the friends, when we got to them."

During this year Mr. Kilham's health was so far re-established, and his soul so devoted to the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, that he entertained the thought of surrendering his position as an ordinary preacher, and dedicating himself to the Mission work. With this view he entered into a correspondence with Mr. Warrener, who was then labouring in the West Indies, and also with Dr. Coke, who at that time had the Wesleyan Missions under his special care. Whether the delicacy of his constitution rendered the carrying out of this enterprise unadvisable, or whether Mr. Wesley disapproved of the project, we are

not prepared to decide; but the intention was overruled, and he continued his labours as an evangelist in his own country.

On Easter Monday, in 1788, Mr. Kilham was united in marriage with Miss Sarah Grey, of Pickering, a lady whose genuine piety, superior sense, ardent affection, and devotion to her husband's welfare, contributed in a high degree to enhance his happiness. The estimate he formed of this accession to his domestic enjoyment, his grateful recognition of Providence in the event, and his susceptibility of strong natural affection, may be seen from the following memorandum:—"I had long entertained the wish of entering into the marriage state; but as my situation laid me under many difficulties, particularly in regard to the fitness of the person for a wife, I had been hitherto prevented from forming a suitable matrimonial connexion. I had made this a matter of earnest prayer to God, and had entreated his direction in a matter of so much importance. Some time after I came into this circuit, a particular friend pointed out Miss Sarah Grey to me, and told me he thought she would make me a proper companion, and supposed she would have no great objection. . . . I was thankful to God for his goodness to me in this particular, and I believed from my heart, that the Lord had graciously pointed her out as a companion for me. I have frequently found my heart overwhelmed with gratitude and love to him, for giving me such a helpmate, for her whole study has been to glorify God, and render herself agreeable to me. He has given me a partner, in whom I find all the qualities I ever desired, and many others which I never looked for. Instead of her being my cross, she is the delight of my eyes, whom, under God, I love, and ever shall love and highly esteem, to use the expression, as my own soul. I have no hindrance from her in the blessed work of the Lord, but am encouraged by her advice and example to be diligent in the Lord's vineyard. I hope this unspeakable mercy will fill my soul with gratitude, and cause my mouth to speak the praises of God."

In this circuit, Mr. Kilham's ministry was attractive and profitable to others, as well as his own people; and as an evidence thereof, he was invited by a congregation of Dissenters, who had a chapel at Helmsley, to become their settled pastor, with the offer of a comfortable maintenance, but he respectfully declined the offer,—an event which proves his disinterestedness, his firm adherence to principle, and his sincere attachment to Methodism.

Another instance of his disinterestedness deserves to be mentioned here. As his marriage with Miss Grey brought a small income into his possession, he generously declined to receive the usual quarterage for the maintenance of his wife; and the noble course thus adopted in the Scarborough Circuit, was the rule to which he adhered during the whole period of his connexion with the Wesleyan body. How many of his calumniators have exhibited conduct equally disinterested and benevolent? Like Mr. Wesley, he felt it more blessed to give than to receive.

The next two circuits in which Mr. Kilham successively laboured, were Pocklington and Whitby, in reference to which, our limits permit us merely to state, that he continued to exhibit the same spirituality of mind, and the same diligent discharge of his ministerial duties, com-

bined with an insatiable ardour for the attainment of knowledge. His reading was extensive, and his investigations into theology, ecclesiastical history, and other departments of knowledge, evince a determination to enrich his mind with truth, and have all his principles based upon a solid foundation. No acquirements, however, were equal in his estimation to the salvation of men. He regarded this blessed result as the grand object of his labours, whether in the closet or the pulpit. He felt it to be the proper business of his life. In a letter to a friend, he says,—"I find my mind more spiritual, and my heart more engaged in the work. I am not satisfied with the good word of the people, unless I can see some fruit of my labour. My whole soul is engaged for God. I am sure I desire nothing in preaching but to save myself and others." In another letter, addressed to his dear friend, Mr. Brackenbury, he remarks:

"I do surrender body, soul, and spirit, freely unto God, but do not gain that conformity to him and holiness, which appear so exceeding desirable. I am convinced, by multiplied experience as well as observation, that unless Christ dwell in our heart by his Spirit, and become the soul of our soul, moving all the motions of our heart and life, it is impossible to live to God. I have not the least dependence upon gifts and graces, any further than they are managed by the Spirit of God, living and reigning in the heart. My whole dependence is upon God for success in preaching the word. I go out in his fear and name; and, according to my ability, speak to the consciences of all who attend. I direct my discourse to the people before me, and frequently inform them of the consequence of refusing the testimony of the Lord. God does in some places own my word with success. I have seen the travail of my Redeemer's soul, and am a little satisfied. Last night, at a village near this place, a woman stood up after preaching, and informed the congregation that God had set her soul at liberty. Another person stopped in the society, and declared God had powerfully awakened his conscience while I was preaching. I rejoiced, and do rejoice, on that account. Though God has not left us without witness in many places, yet our labours have not been attended with much success. . . . I hope God will manifest his love, and come powerfully among us. I believe, could those of us who preach the gospel prevail on ourselves to live and act as messengers of the Lord, we should soon see the devil's kingdom giving way to the kingdom of Christ. I cannot expect to be useful to many, till I gain a greater renewal of soul. Were I in the holy of holies myself—to burn and shine like a seraph in holy living and love to all, I believe my labours would be greatly blessed. There appears a veil between this state and my soul. I am wishing and praying that the veil may be rent, and my soul speedily admitted. I find faith exceedingly necessary to admit the soul into the depths of God. Unless faith carry the soul out of self and the world, and lead her to live in God as her proper element, the divine nature cannot be received, and its fruits manifested in the heart and life."

So far as we have reviewed the personal history of Mr. Kilham, we have had abundant evidence of the sincerity and fervour of his piety as a Christian, and of his zeal and devotedness as a minister. We have

now to contemplate him in the more prominent events of his life, as a promoter of Methodist reform.

SECTION II.

MR. KILHAM'S PERSONAL HISTORY CONTINUED, FROM THE DEATH OF MR. WESLEY, IN 1791, TO THE DEATH OF MR. KILHAM, IN 1798.

The 2nd of March, 1791, was the memorable period when the venerable founder of Methodism, after the apostolic labours of half a century, entered into his glorious rest. Benevolent, simple-hearted, and devoted as he was, yet his church predilections induced him to give to the character and constitution of Methodism some anomalous elements, alike incompatible with the proper functions of the ministry, and the just rights of the people. The community of which he was the founder, was designed by him never to assume the proper character and position of a church, but to exist as a peculiar organization within the pale of the Establishment, and to act as an auxiliary to it. Hence the members, in their united capacity, were called Societies, not Churches; the preachers, not ministers, but helpers or lay preachers; and in the appellations given to the other officers, such as stewards and leaders, care was taken to adopt no designation which could possibly indicate for the Methodist body the prerogatives of a church. Both the names and the functions proper to a church, were to be regarded as the exclusive prerogatives of the Establishment, and were, therefore, rigidly withheld from the Methodist community. In conformity with this singular policy, preaching was forbidden during the hours of church service; the preachers were neither to receive ordination, nor to assume the right of administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These privileges were to be sought for by the people at the hands, not of their own pastors, but of church ministers; and conformity to this regulation was regarded as a practical repudiation of Dissent, and a badge of adherence to the Established Church.

Other serious errors committed by Mr. Wesley were—first, the retention of that arbitrary and absolute power which had naturally fallen into his hands as the father of the community; and, secondly, the transferring of that absolute authority to the preachers, especially to the legal hundred, who were incorporated by the Deed of Declaration as the sole legislators and governors of the body, to the exclusion of laymen from the annual Conference, and from their just share in the general administration of church discipline. At present, we merely state these historic facts, reserving our animadversions on their character and tendency for a subsequent part of this work. Let it suffice for the present to remark that the Rev. Dr. Coke, who was an especial friend of Mr. Wesley, and whose whole energies were devoted to the cause of Methodism, observed respecting the power which the system put into the hands of preachers, "Hitherto we have been, since the death of Mr. Wesley, the most perfect aristocracy existing perhaps upon earth. The people have had no power: we the whole, in the fullest sense which can

be conceived. If there be any change in favour of religious liberty, the people certainly should have some power."

Such, then, was the constitution of Methodism as formed by Mr. Wesley, and as left at his demise. During the latter part of his life, considerable dissatisfaction had appeared; but immediately after his death, the sentiments and emotions which had been suppressed, like a pent-up fire, burst forth, and threatened the community with a general conflagration. Four distinct classes of opinion prevailed in the community. There was one party which advocated the continuance of things as they were; another, which contended for strict adherence to the church, but sought an abridgment of the preachers' power and authority, especially by the introduction of lay delegation to district meetings and the annual Conference. This view was embraced by many of the trustees. A third party contended for the right of the people to worship in church hours, and of the preachers to administer the sacraments. With this class many of the preachers were identified. But there was a fourth class, who contended not only for entire separation from the Established Church, and the formation of Methodism into a distinct and independent community, but also for such a remodelling of its constitution as would give the laity that position in the administration and government of the body, which is enjoyed by other Christian communities, and is so clearly sanctioned by the New Testament Scriptures. To this class of consistent and thorough reformers belonged Mr. Kilham, and a considerable number of others, including both preachers and laymen; but they were not nearly so numerous as those who advocated the more partial and contracted measures.

Immediately after Mr. Wesley's death, commotions began. In May, the trustees, leaders, and stewards at Hull, issued a circular to the Connexion, contending for adherence to the church, and the continuance of the whole system as left by Mr. Wesley. Mr. Kilham wrote a sensible and judicious reply to this circular, and it was immediately adopted by the people at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and extensively circulated in the Connexion. In this pamphlet he expresses the profoundest respect for Mr. Wesley's memory, and pays a tribute of honour to his labours and usefulness, but argues that, like other men, he was fallible; and it was incumbent upon the leading minds in the community, at the present crisis, when threatened with dangerous agitation, not hastily to decide upon perpetuating every part of the system, but to inquire, calmly and soberly, whether it was in all respects in conformity with the word of God, and the just rights of the people. He argued that, practically, the Methodist people *were* already Dissenters; that it was as much the prerogative of the Methodist preachers, as of church clergymen, to administer the sacraments; and that the people had a right to receive those ordinances at their hands, if they chose. But while these rights were asserted, the chief object of the letter was to prevent the exercise of an intolerant spirit, to secure perfect liberty of conscience to all parties on these matters, to guard against any hasty decisions, and to induce a calm and prayerful inquiry before any steps were taken to bind regulations imperatively on the people. The devout and humble spirit in which Mr. Kilham wrote this letter, is transparent

in the beautiful prayer which he published with the circular, and which in substance he wished the people to use at that crisis:—

“O great and ever-blessed Lord God Almighty! we prostrate ourselves at thy feet, and humbly adore thy most holy name. We thank thee for sparing thy servant, Mr. Wesley, so many years, and for calling him at last so triumphantly to thyself. We submit to thy will in this with thankfulness, and own the abundance of thy mercy and love. O our God! do thou become our leader and guide in all our future life. Raise up, by thy Divine power, men possessed of wisdom and grace to manage the cause we have espoused. Do thou, O God! superintend our affairs, and order everything according as thy infinite wisdom shall direct. Let no divisions take place that will in any way injure our Connexion. Let the world know that thou art our God. Let them see the cause is thine, and that thou canst uphold it. If it be for thy glory that we should separate from the Established Church in these lands, dispose the hearts of the people to submit cheerfully to it. If it be most for thy glory to continue as we are, reconcile all our minds to it. We are conscious, O Lord! if thou wilt direct and influence, we shall be guided aright. Pour out thy spirit, we beseech thee, O God! upon all our societies and congregations; let them know thou art still with us. Give us to see of the travail of our Redeemer's soul, and let both us that preach, and those who hear, be truly satisfied. We leave all in thy hands—let thy will be done, O Lord! by us, as it is by the angels that surround thy throne. Grant us these, with every other mercy, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

This letter was extensively circulated, and operated no doubt favourably in repressing that spirit of intolerance which was exhibited by the impatient advocates for adherence to the Establishment. Other addresses were written, and meetings were held in different parts of the kingdom, to discuss the topics which were then so rife in Methodism. But the Conference of 1791 was approaching, and for its decisions many minds were looking with intense anxiety. A multitude of letters and petitions were sent to the Conference by the societies in every part of the kingdom—expressive of their views and sentiments in relation to the topics so generally discussed; but it is a singular fact (which not until some time afterwards was made public), that all or nearly all these memorials were burnt without being opened,—an event which suggested to many reflecting minds the necessity of sending to Conference more effective representatives than such perishable materials. After much discussion, the Conference adopted a vague and general determination to take up and pursue the plan their aged father had left them, exactly in the manner he had done. The ambiguity of this resolution produced, apparently, a temporary satisfaction amongst all parties. As interpreted by the church party, it seemed to express adherence to the Establishment. As interpreted by those inclined to Dissent and freedom, it seemed to admit the operation of that progressive and expansive principle which had guided Mr. Wesley in general, and gradually built up the system of Methodism into a powerful community; and the continued operation of this principle was expected to work out for Methodism all the results necessary for its complete freedom in government, and its

independence as a distinct denomination, in the full enjoyment of its own ordinances and privileges. Nor were these different views of the resolution concealed, but expressed by the preachers during the discussions in Conference.

This tranquillity, however, as might be expected, was soon disturbed. The High Church party took the alarm when some ministers assumed their right to administer the sacrament to the people, and published inflammatory tracts and circulars against them. It was an occasion of this kind which brought Mr. Kilham again into the field of controversy. Mr. Cownley, a venerable minister, labouring with Mr. Kilham in the Newcastle Circuit, had administered the Lord's Supper to a few pious members, who had earnestly desired and importunately pleaded for that ordinance. This compliance with the conscientious principles of pious people, brought upon God's aged ambassador a violent attack in a pamphlet by one Mr. Grey. Mr. Kilham published a spirited reply, in which he not only defended the character of the venerable Mr. Cownley, but discussed the general question in relation to the sacraments and the position of the Methodist body in respect to the church, maintaining, of course, the right of the preachers to administer the sacraments, and of the people to receive them at their hands.

Mr. Kilham received from several of his brethren of high standing in the ministry, assurances of sympathy with his sentiments, and approval of what he had done to subserve the cause of truth and freedom. Mr. T. Taylor, in a letter to Mr. Kilham, says, "I have seen your pamphlet, and like it well—send me a hundred. It bears my thoughts, and almost some of my expressions." Mr. Pawson, one of the oldest preachers in the Connexion, addressed a letter to Mr. Kilham, expressing his high approval of the reply he had furnished, and assuring him, that all who had met in Manchester were on his side, especially Messrs. Thomas and Henry Taylor, Bradburn, Clarke, and Snowden, and that he hoped the matter would be satisfactorily settled at the next Conference. He had a similar testimony from Mr. Bradburn.

To the Methodist people who now rejoice in the privilege of receiving the Lord's Supper in their own chapels, and from the hands of their own ministers, it will appear almost incredible that at the ensuing Conference Mr. Kilham was tried and censured for writing the pamphlet in behalf of this privilege, and in defence of Mr. Cownley, the truly pious and venerable minister, who, for conscience' sake, had administered that sacred ordinance. Yet so it was. A majority of the preachers, through the influence of Dr. Coke, Mr. Benson, Mr. Thompson, and others, were induced to stand up in approval of a sentence of censure against this devoted and honest man. This unrighteous censure, however, was not unanimous. Mr. Moore, Mr. Bradburn, and a number of influential preachers, spoke openly in favour of the publication, and boldly maintained the truth of its sentiments.

Mr. Kilham had a just sense of the wrong inflicted upon him by this sentence; but he bore it as a Christian, patiently suffering for the truth of God and the liberties of his people. He had, indeed, prepared his mind for the result, and calmly committed his cause into the hand of God, before the trial came on, as the following prayer, recorded in his diary, indicates:—

"Now, O Lord, if thou sufferest me to go to the Conference, enable me to bear insult and reproach with patience, and give me grace to render good for evil; and help me to speak boldly and calmly in thy name, on subjects that require courage and firmness. Let me never desert the cause that is for thy glory, and the good of thy church. Thou canst purge our Connexion, and make us holy and unblameable before thee. O God, do thou enlighten the minds of the people, that they may see the privileges of the Gospel, and embrace them. Incline the preachers to give liberty to the societies; and let everything that belongs to arbitrary power be removed from their minds. Dispose us, O Lord, to examine our doctrines and discipline by thy unerring word of truth, and to expunge everything that is contrary to thy will. If any charges are brought against me at the Conference, help me to defend my character and thy truth, O Lord. Through grace I am determined to be thine for ever. Bless our Connexion and thy church everywhere, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 13th July, 1792."

Petitions and memorials on the subjects which engaged the attention of the Methodist community, were addressed to this Conference almost as numerous as they had been the preceding year; but again they were all destroyed, without being read!

Aberdeen was the circuit to which Mr. Kilham was appointed at this Conference. "In this locality he had an ample opportunity of observing the constitution and operations of the Presbyterian Church, in its sessions, presbyteries, synods, and assemblies; and as laymen are associated with ministers in all these meetings, it occurred to him that this rational and scriptural mode of church government strikingly contrasted with what obtained in his own denomination, and he felt it a sacred duty to suggest the adoption of this just and equitable principle of ministerial and lay co-operation in every department of the Methodist economy.* He therefore published a circular letter, under the signature of 'Trueman and Freeman,' and sent it to the most influential persons throughout the Connexion. In this letter he insists upon the necessity of a living representation of the people, by the sending of lay delegates freely chosen; and, in showing the inefficiency of letters and memorials, notices the fact, that such documents, on the motion of a certain preacher, had been destroyed without examination. In the name of the people he puts the question, 'Would it not be proper for us to have some concern in managing such matters as materially affect ourselves?' He then proposes that the appointment of stewards, leaders, local preachers, and the recommendation of preachers to travel, should be done, not by the sole authority of ministers, but by a majority at meetings composed of the preachers and officers in the societies or circuits."

During the first year of Mr. Kilham's residence in Aberdeen, he felt

* It has often been insinuated that Mr. Kilham borrowed his principles of liberty from the French revolutionists. This is a vile slander. The above fact shows that the rational principle of admitting the laity to their proper position in the church, was first suggested to his mind by the practice of a sister community—the Church of Scotland, which principle became afterwards fully established in his mind by a careful study of the scriptures, and the constitution of the primitive churches.

called upon publicly to encounter the vain and demoralizing practices of horse-racing, card-playing, and theatrical amusements. This he did by the publication of a pamphlet, which greatly incensed the devotees of worldly pleasure, and induced a set of theatrical performers to determine to caricature him in the play called "*The Hypocrite*." But the public respect and influence he had acquired by his preaching and general conduct, caused the theatre to be nearly deserted on the occasion, and the event only tended to raise Mr. Kilham still higher in general estimation.

At the Conference of 1793, the question respecting the sacraments was again discussed, when the decision of the preceding year was set aside, and the following resolution adopted:—"That the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered by the preachers in any part of our Connexion, except where the whole society is unanimous for it, and *will not be contented without it*; and, in even those few exempt societies, it shall be administered, as far as practicable, in the evening only, and according to the form of the Church of England." It was not likely that such a determination could produce satisfaction, and as time passed on, events continued to show the great and threatening difficulties into which both the Conference and the Connexion in general were cast by the unwise policy of Mr. Wesley, in placing Methodists in such an anomalous and perplexing position.

Mr. Kilham was reappointed to the Aberdeen Circuit, and continued to labour with acceptance and usefulness. Messrs. Bradford, Crowther, Edmonson, and other preachers, honoured him with their confidence, encouraging him, by their letters, to promote the cause of Methodist reform, and expressing their hope of its ultimate success. An attempt was covertly made this year to introduce the episcopal system, and a private meeting of preachers was held at Lichfield (a place where Methodism was not planted), in order to concoct measures for carrying out the design. But the parties, instead of being made bishops, had a very narrow escape from being taken up by the magistrates as political conspirators. The bishop scheme became known, and awakened a determined opposition among many of the preachers. Mr. Kilham, at the suggestion of Mr. Edmonson, wrote a pamphlet against the project, in which he employs the keen edge of satire and rebuke, especially against Mr. Mather, who in three short days had been metamorphosed from a plain Methodist preacher into a deacon, priest, and bishop, and was understood to be one of the principal promoters of this ambitious scheme. Mr. Kilham loved the simplicity of the gospel, and from principle he abhorred the very appearance of priestcraft, or any approach to pomp and ecclesiastical domination. In this pamphlet, he again advocated the principle of lay representation, as conformable to the scriptures, to the constitution of the ancient church, and essential to the liberties of the people. Several of his brethren expressed their approval of his performance, and their determination to stand by him in his struggles for the emancipation of Methodism.

The Conference of 1794 was held at Bristol, and was distinguished by contests between the High Church party and their opponents, which must cause every lover of Christianity to blush. All the liberal party

required was mere toleration—permission to worship God at a convenient hour, and celebrate religious ordinances according to the dictates of their conscience, without the least interference with either the opinions or the practices of those brethren who differed from them in sentiment; but expostulations were in vain. The pro-Church party, especially the trustees, seemed determined to lord it over their brethren, and either to have uniformity, or rend the Connexion to pieces. Yet some further concession was gained, even at this Conference, in behalf of the scriptural prerogatives of the preachers and the privileges of the people.

The community was now in a fearful state of agitation, and apparently in danger of total disruption. In the month of November, Mr. Kilham wrote a small pamphlet, and signed it "Aquila and Priscilla," in which he states the particulars of the dispute between the Bristol trustees and their opponents, exhibiting the principles involved in the controversy, and the course which reason and scripture required the parties to pursue. This pamphlet was considered the most lucid and faithful statement of the case that had been published.

When the Conference of 1795 arrived, the contest was still going on. Mr. Kilham attended this Conference, which was held in Manchester; but prior to his setting out, he wrote a pamphlet, for distribution among the preachers only, with a view to induce them to come to such determinations as would accord with the word of God and sound views of church government. In this pamphlet he endeavoured to show, first, that the original plan of Mr. Wesley in the organization of Methodism was progressive; and if properly considered, admitted of all such modifications as were necessary for extending rational freedom to the people; secondly, that though the Conference had professed to follow Mr. Wesley's example, it had in many instances departed from the spirit and tendency of his measures, and pursued such a course of proceeding as he would not have approved had he been living; and, thirdly, he maintained that as the scripture was the only infallible guide of the church, they ought to acknowledge no other authority, but frame their regulations solely by its unerring dictates and requirements.*

This Conference was rendered memorable by the passing of certain regulations designated the Articles of Pacification. It would occupy too much of our space to insert these articles at length; but it may be remarked that it was now conceded that the sacraments might be administered where a majority of the trustees, conjoined with a majority of the stewards and leaders, desired it; each case, however, being still subject to the consent of Conference.

In other matters of discipline and government, very little was conceded to the people. The admission of lay representatives to district meetings and Conference was still refused, and absolute power as to the appointment of church officers, and the calling out of preachers, was still left in the hands of the superintendent minister. With respect to the case of a preacher being immoral, erroneous in doctrine, deficient in ability, or violating the rules of the body, it was conceded that a

* *Vide* Methodist New Connexion Jubilee Volume.

meeting composed of the preachers of the district, the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the circuit, should have power to cause the accused preacher to be removed from the circuit. This was certainly an advance in the right direction, but it was only a small portion of those important privileges and rights, which the voice of reason and scripture so imperatively demanded.

Although the Articles of Pacification passed the Conference, there was a very respectable minority who were not satisfied with them, *and strongly objected to the ambiguity of some expressions employed therein*. This dissatisfaction was too well founded, as subsequent events have proved. Mr. Kilham drew up an address to the Conference, protesting against the defective character of these articles, and fifty-eight of the preachers signed the document, amongst whom we recognise the names of some of the most respectable members of the community. Supported by these signatures, the address was presented to the Conference, but it was not permitted to be read. During this Conference, the scheme for establishing bishops was introduced at three different times, under as many varied phases and pretences; but the design, however artfully concealed, was seen through by the dissentients, and had to be abandoned.

Mr. Kilham's appointment this year was for Alnwick, the last circuit in which he was permitted to labour as a Wesleyan minister. Impressed with the conviction that permanent peace would never be established in the body until such a constitution was adopted as secured to the people New Testament rights and privileges, he felt it incumbent upon him to make another effort for the attainment of this important object. Under this impression, he wrote a pamphlet entitled "*The Progress of Liberty*." In the former part of this work he adverts to the course of Mr. Wesley in the progress of Methodism, showing that he had acted from time to time as altered circumstances required; he glances at the alterations which had been effected since Mr. Wesley's death; and he analyzes "*the Articles of Pacification*," pointing out their defects, and their general unfitness to produce permanent satisfaction.

In the second part of this work he lays down the "*Outlines of a Constitution*," which he humbly proposes to the consideration of "*The People called Methodists*." This outline embraces the following particulars:—

First, That instead of the preachers having the sole power to admit and expel members, these acts should be done with the consent of the people or their representatives.

Second, That the members should have a voice in choosing their own leaders.

Third, That local preachers, instead of being appointed by the circuit preacher, should be examined and approved by the Leaders' and Quarterly Meetings; and with the latter meeting also should rest the power of receiving and dismissing them.

Fourth, That as it was impossible to allow the people to choose their own ministers on account of the itinerant plan, yet the Quarterly Meetings should have a voice in recommending preachers to travel.

Fifth, That lay delegates, appointed by the Quarterly Meetings, should attend the District Meetings.

And, lastly, he proposes, "with submission to the preachers and the Connexion at large, to appoint one or two lay delegates from every district meeting, to attend the Conference."

Such were the propositions of Mr. Kilham; and, it may here be observed, such were the principles adopted as elements of the constitution of the New Connexion at its origin, and such remain its essential and distinguishing features at the present day. For publishing the pamphlet advocating these essential principles of freedom, Mr. Kilham was tried and expelled from the ministry at the ensuing Conference, 1796.*

Soon after the appearance of "The Progress of Liberty," Mr. Pawson wrote the author a letter, which clearly indicated that deep displeasure was felt at the production. But Mr. Kilham was not a reed shaken with the wind. He replied in a letter of some length, maintaining the purity of his motives, and expressing his confidence in God, whatever might be the result. "God is my witness," says he, "that I have spoken the truth as far as I know it, with no other view than to bring about such a reformation as the necessity of our affairs requires. I foresaw the storm that would gather, but determined to meet it in the name of the Lord Jesus. And instead of repenting of what I have done, I bless God for giving me courage to come forward in such a good cause. I am not in the least discouraged by what you have written. I had counted the cost before my pamphlet went to the press, and if you cast me out of the synagogue, the Lord Jesus will amply provide for me and my family. Can you suppose that I would have ventured my all to the stake, in publishing this pamphlet, if I had not eyed the glory of God in the good of our Connexion? The persecution I expect from my brethren, instead of being pleasant, is painful; but to bear it for the sake of Jesus Christ, is what I glory in before all. And I shall cheerfully, under the influence of divine grace, go without the camp, to bear the reproach of the Son of God, even from my brethren."

Such sentiments were worthy of the man, and the cause in which he was engaged.

In the month of December, Mr. Kilham was tried at a district meeting in Newcastle, and subsequently by another, at Sunderland; but the only decision adopted, was to refer the matter to the ensuing Conference. As the period of his trial drew near, his confidence in the integrity of his principles, and his determination to abide by them, continued firm and unshaken. His constancy never left him; his trust in God never faltered; and his devotional spirit seemed unabated. He observes—

"I feel my mind fully determined to pursue the way that appears most for the glory of God, and the good of mankind. The Lord is undoubtedly on the side of them that trust in him, and I am determined to live devoted to his service. May the Lord sanctify the present contest in our Connexion to his glory! The preachers are making every possible opposition to a reform, and to the interests of the people, but the people seemed determined in many places to claim their privi-

* *Vide* Jubilee Volume of the Methodist New Connexion.

leges. Accept, O Lord, of this last labour of love in the pamphlet I have written; may it spread through the societies and become useful to them, in causing them to see their privileges, to claim them with meekness, and with that firmness which the truth inspires."

The Conference of 1796 had now arrived. London was the place of meeting, and Mr. Thomas Taylor, formerly Mr. Kilham's supporter, was elected president. The trial came on, but no charge was alleged impugning his moral conduct, his religious sentiments, his efficiency as a minister, or his zeal and diligence in the discharge of his duties; nor was any attempt made to disprove the reasonableness, the justice, or the scriptural character of those reforms which he had advocated. Discussion on these topics was indeed precluded, first, by a formal inquiry as to whether he had not, on his reception as a preacher into full connexion, given a pledge to abide by the minutes and rules of which he had received a copy; and, secondly, whether or not it was his intention to abide by them? Nothing could be more sagaciously contrived to reduce him to a dilemma, and preclude any inquiry into his principles.

The plan was designed to substitute authority for investigation, and to employ judicial power instead of argument. No trial, therefore, was instituted respecting *principles*, but several passages, detached from their context, were selected from his writings, and made the basis of charges against him. Mr. Kilham desired a copy of those charges, but was refused. Though he pressed for them, in order that he might give them his best consideration, and be able to prepare his defence, he was refused. Though he promised not to copy a line of them, he was still refused. It is just to observe, however, that what the Conference itself unrighteously withheld, the Rev. Adam Clarke voluntarily and privately supplied.

It is unnecessary to give an extended history of the trial; this has been carefully done at length by J. Blackwell, Esq., in his excellent "Life of Mr. Kilham." Suffice it to say that Mr. Kilham was expelled, and expelled without a single charge against or stain upon his morals, his piety, his doctrine, his devotedness as a minister, or his attachment to Methodism.

Many attempts were made to induce him to recant, and penitently submit to the Conference. But to all such endeavours he had only one reply—"I will cheerfully confess anything you shall convince me is wrong, but I cannot play the hypocrite, and feign myself sorrowful, when I feel a contrary principle in my heart." He did indeed candidly acknowledge and retract some offensive expressions, but to his reforming principles he clung with a martyr's constancy.

When Mr. Kilham was expelled from the Wesleyan body, he did not unite with another community, nor attempt to effect a division in the one from which he was unjustly severed. He employed himself in preaching the gospel in various places, and in conducting the "Methodist Monitor"—a periodical devoted chiefly to the cause of religious liberty.

As the expulsion of Mr. Kilham was unconnected with any charge against his character as a minister and a Christian, and unconnected, too, with any attempt to refute his principles, it was doubtless intended to crush the spirit of reform; but this result did not follow. The man

was excommunicated by his fellows, but not forsaken of his God. The principles he advocated had a foundation more durable than Conference decrees, and the power that sustains them still, is infinitely mightier than any conventional authority, and will carry them to ultimate triumph.

As might be expected, there was much excitement during the year, in various parts of the Connexion. In Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Stockport, Sheffield, and other places, meetings were held, and central committees formed, for correspondence and co-operation with the advocates and friends of Christian freedom, with a view to effect that which was so generally desired—the adoption of a liberal constitution in the Methodist body. But as time advanced, the prospect of effecting this became fainter; and some friends in Leeds suggested to Mr. Kilham the propriety of a fund being raised by subscription to meet expenses in the event of a separation, and also as a source of encouragement to such preachers as might be disposed to ally themselves with a reformed section of Methodists. Mr. Kilham's reply to this proposition manifests both his invincible integrity and his singleness of purpose, as well as his extreme reluctance to abandon the hope of a division being even yet prevented. He said, "I disapprove of it altogether—I yet hope that a division will be prevented; but whatever be the issue, if the preachers will not act from the conviction of their own minds, the Lord will provide. I am determined never to countenance the holding out a golden bait to allure them. Shall we make the love of filthy lucre our condemnation? Let us put our confidence in Jehovah, and pursue the paths of uprightness, and all shall be well.

The friends in Leeds favourable to the reform movement purchased Ebenezer Chapel, which had formerly been occupied by the Baptists. Mr. Kilham preached the opening sermon, May 7, 1797. Numbers crowded to hear the gospel, where they could enjoy the ordinances of religion without any human restrictions; and in this chapel the Methodist New Connexion was subsequently formed.

It will naturally be inquired,—How was it that the preachers who had previously acted in concert with Mr. Kilham, and encouraged him to proceed in his efforts to reform the body, did not stand by him, and declare their sentiments at the time of his trial and expulsion? A perusal of their correspondence, and an examination of concurrent facts, afford an easy solution to this problem. There was a want of unanimity in sentiment and object amongst the ministers as well as amongst the laymen in relation to the matters in dispute. But few of them, indeed, were thorough reformers; some were merely opposed to the intolerant trustees, who desired to keep the people in subordination to the Church; and some were opposed to the schemes of the leading preachers for introducing the bishop system; yet both these parties encouraged Mr. Kilham to proceed, because his writings were promotive of their respective objects. Others were sincere reformers, and heartily desired all that Mr. Kilham contended for, yet only three of these had the courage to resign at the ensuing Conference; the rest, through timidity or for prudential reasons, retained their situation in the body. With this latter class must be numbered Mr. Henry Taylor, and Mr. W. Bramwell, who maintained a confidential correspondence with Mr. Kilham

on the subject of reform after his expulsion, and expressed themselves as being determined to have a reformation, or to leave the Connexion at the ensuing Conference. Mr. Taylor, indeed, actually sent in his resignation, but afterwards recalled it. Probably both he and Mr. Bramwell, and others who had like convictions, were deterred from more decisive action by the fear that the struggle would not be successful. The fact, however, that men of such sound understanding, eminent piety, extraordinary usefulness, and unquestionable attachment to Methodism, thus sanctioned Mr. Kilham after his expulsion, affords a most unequivocal testimony to his integrity and piety, as well as to the soundness of his principles, and it expressed the estimation in which they held the proceedings of the late Conference.

Amid the anxieties and trials which Mr. Kilham had to suffer for the sake of conscience and religious liberty, he was called to endure a most painful domestic calamity in the death of his much loved and most amiable partner. Her health had been declining for some time, and on the 23rd of February, 1797, she died, being in the forty-first year of her age. She was in every respect a helpmate to Mr. Kilham. True religion supported her in the midst of her trials, and filled her heart with joy in the prospect of death. She left behind her one daughter; two sons had died in infancy. Mr. Kilham keenly felt the loss of his estimable partner, but he bowed in pious resignation to the will of God.

The Conference of 1797 was held at Leeds, when the final and decisive struggle was made in behalf of religious freedom, resistance to which was the immediate occasion of originating our own religious denomination. As in former years, deputations from trustees and societies were again convened to exercise their influence upon Conference. Indeed, since the death of Mr. Wesley, the Conference of lay deputations had been as regular as the Conference of the preachers. On this occasion there were about seventy present, influenced by several objects. Some were still aiming to effect Church adherence, others were in favour of entire liberty of conscience in this respect; but all, it would seem, were desirous of reducing the enormous power of the preachers, and establishing a corresponding increase of power in favour of the laity.

At several previous meetings, held at different places for the purpose of appointing delegates, it had been proposed that one essential condition required from the Conference should be the restoration of Mr. Kilham to his place in the ministry; but Mr. Kilham, with his characteristic disinterestedness and singleness of heart, declared that no treaty in relation to his restoration should embarrass their negotiations with the Conference. He was influenced only by public spirit. He had suffered for the cause of liberty, and was willing still to suffer to any extent, and therefore insisted upon his case, as that of an individual, being totally disregarded and lost sight of in their arrangements with the Conference.

"On the 1st of August the delegates or deputations met, and three different propositions on the subject of lay representation were successively submitted to Conference; but they were all negatived. The first proposition was, that 'two or more lay representatives from each dis-

strict meeting should be admitted into Conference, to co-operate with the preachers in transacting the general business of the Connexion.' This was rejected by the Conference. The second proposition submitted was, that representatives might be admitted into the district meetings to unite with the ministers in the general business of each district respectively. This proposition also the Conference rejected. The third measure proposed by the delegates was, that representatives should be sent from the different circuits, to the place where the Conference was held, but to meet in an apartment by themselves, and thus constitute a second house of legislature, somewhat like the House of Commons; and that no new law or alteration should be rendered valid unless approved by this lay convention. Such a method of transacting business would, no doubt, have involved inconveniences; but more favourable measures being rejected, the delegates had recourse to this final plan in order to secure the peace of the Connexion, and prevent a division. This proposition was, however, rejected by the Conference. Some modifications were, indeed, made in the laws or usages respecting financial matters, and the reception and expulsion of members, and the appointment of officers; but in respect to holding special meetings, by the people, to consider abuses or send petitions to Conference, there was an actual abridgment of the privileges which usage had previously given to the people; for these meetings were now restricted by such conditions as rendered them all but impracticable—in fact, the power to hold such meetings was *virtually* taken away. On reviewing the determination of the Conference in their resisting the reasonable and scriptural requests thus presented by respectable and pious men, assembled from different parts of the kingdom with an honest intention to promote the welfare of the Connexion, we would exercise all the charity which the gospel requires, and judge as impartially as we hope to be judged at the last day; but, after all, we are forced to the conclusion, that the Conference was chargeable with a great degree of injustice, not to say tyranny, and incurred a fearful amount of responsibility.”*

The Conference having finally cut off all hope of reform, the friends of scriptural freedom felt themselves imperatively required to secede from the parent body, and organize themselves into a distinct denomination, under a constitution which secured to them the enjoyment of those scriptural rights and privileges which they had so long sought for in vain. Three of the preachers, Messrs. W. Thom, S. Eversfield, and A. Cummins, voluntarily left the advantages of an established and somewhat opulent community, and cast in their lot with the devoted Kilham in the organization of the new itinerancy, with the prospect of poverty, reproach, and toils of no ordinary kind. On the 9th of August, these brethren, with a number of delegates from the people, met together in Ebenezer Chapel, Leeds, when Mr. Thom was elected president, and the foundation of a constitution was laid in conformity with the principles which Mr. Kilham had publicly set forth and advocated in his writings. A particular examination of these principles will be entered upon hereafter.

* *Vide* Jubilee Volume, p. 109.

When the New Connexion was originated, the entire number who identified themselves with it was but about five thousand members, situated chiefly in the towns of Alnwick, Ashton, Bolton, Chester, Hanley, Leeds, Liverpool, Macclesfield, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle, Sheffield, and Stockport, which became the centres of distinct circuits.

The separation being now effected, and the new denomination formed, it was felt desirable by Mr. Kilham and his coadjutors that both animosity and controversy should cease between them and the parent community, and each pursue its peaceful course in the proper work of extending the Redeemer's kingdom. This was the pacific conduct inculcated upon the members of the New Connexion, in an address issued by Mr. Kilham, the noble sentiments of which do honour to his name. These sentiments sprang from a heart conscious both of purity of motive and the peace which only true religion can inspire. Such a state of mind appears also in the following entry recorded in his journal, at the close of this important Conference:—"My soul exceedingly rejoiced in the Lord, and I found myself quickened and comforted. I had strong confidence in the Lord's approbation of our measures, and found great peace from the prospect of success and the prosperity of our cause."

Mr. Kilham was appointed to labour in the Sheffield Circuit. His reception was marked by glowing affection; and while his ministry was attractive, it was attended with the divine blessing. Writing to Mr. Harrop, of Ashton, he thus speaks of his labours and prospects:—

"The labour is so great here, that none could go through what I have to encounter, unless his bones were like brass, and his flesh like iron. We have increased so much lately, that our chapel is quite too small; I think it may be said in truth, that I never preach on Sunday morning at eight, or on a work night, without having about 1,500 hearers, and on Sunday evenings we do not know what to do. Our society in Sheffield is very large, and we have many joining us in the country places—above twenty places have been provided in the country. The people are ready to pull me to pieces, to go to see them—I go as much as possible, but cannot visit them all at present. I must have some person to help, or they will help me into the world of spirits. The people beg of me to spare myself; but how is it possible when the harvest is so white already? I hope God will give me health, and make his face to shine upon us more gloriously than ever. We have blessed meetings. The people taste of the good Word of Life, and of the powers of the world to come. There is a general quickening in the old members; and about fifty new ones, with backsliders, have come forward to our help. Many have been awakened and set at liberty. We have the power of God present to heal in our public exercises. Last Sunday I was in the circuit, while the people crowded into the town to hear a local brother deliver to them the word of salvation."

It would not comport either with our limits or our feelings, to dwell upon the calumnies, reproaches, and malign predictions, that were uttered against the founders of the Connexion, especially against Mr. Kilham, at this time. He bore them with manly fortitude and Christian forbearance, knowing that his witness was in heaven, and his record

on high; and under this assurance, he urged on his way, strong in the strength and grace which God supplies. These persecutions were relieved, too, by the kindness and affection which some noble-minded men, who still remained in the Old Connexion, continued to exercise towards Mr. Kilham. Among these honourable exceptions, Mr. Smith, of Newcastle, and Mr. Longridge, of Sunderland, have a distinguished place.

Having been a widower about fourteen months, Mr. Kilham entered a second time into the marriage state, with Miss Spurr, of Sheffield. Respecting this union, he observes, "We lived happily together, and all our delight was in seeking the things that made to our eternal interests."

The second Conference was held in Sheffield, when Mr. Kilham was appointed to the Nottingham Circuit. Here his reception was one of warm affection, and his labours abundant. Indeed his position as Secretary to the Conference, and as the leading spirit in a great religious enterprise, brought upon him an amount of correspondence, and mental and physical exertion, which nature could not sustain. The ordinary waking hours were not sufficient, even for a mind so active and industrious as his own, to get through the miscellaneous duties which pressed upon him from all quarters. He could seldom spare more than five hours for sleep, and the toils of long and exhausting journeys to distant parts of the Connexion, on special duties arising from his position, added to his every-day engagements, wasted his strength, and made him an early victim to dissolution. Yet, amidst all this exertion, and all the suffering he had to endure, his mind was kept buoyant and peaceful by the power of genuine religion. "Labour," he says, "is delightful when the heart is truly engaged. Perhaps very few have more exercises than I have at present. I can seldom spare more than five hours for sleep, and I am frequently much fatigued; but still I find that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness." "I am happy in doing and suffering the will of God. He is my refuge and song; may his grace influence and help me to the end!"

In the month of November, Mr. Kilham having performed a most arduous and laborious journey on horseback into Wales, returned home the subject of much debility and exhaustion, and shortly after was arrested by the illness which proved fatal. On Wednesday evening, December 12th, 1798, it seems he contracted cold in returning from a country appointment, and had a restless night. On the next day he complained of a violent pain between his shoulders, which he imagined to proceed from a small piece of bone which had lodged in the upper part of his throat on the previous day. A surgeon was called for, who extracted a very small splinter, and he immediately found relief. On the following Sabbath, he observed to a friend that he believed his throat was quite healed, and he did not now feel anything of it.

On Monday he appeared to be much better, and came down stairs. On Tuesday morning he still appeared to be recovering, though the previous night he had been restless, and his stomach was sickly. On Wednesday morning he still seemed to be better, and went out; and, indeed, was so far recovered, that his medical attendant took leave of him, supposing his aid no longer needful. Still his nights were extremely restless, as if nature were too exhausted to find repose. His affectionate partner observes:—"In the evening, when we were alone,

my husband made an observation which led me to ask him if he thought he should die soon. He answered, 'I am quite resigned either to life or death, whichever is the will of God.' I felt my mind much affected. I could not but shed tears while I asked him again, 'Do you think you shall recover?' He answered, 'I have no other apprehensions; I should like to live longer if it be the will of God.' There was a meeting of leaders and local preachers this evening, at which my husband was present different times; he prayed at the conclusion of the meeting, and several were much affected with a sense of the uncommon power he had in his prayer. He coughed a little this evening, and said he was not free from the pain in his back. He took some meat to supper, for the first time during his illness. When I asked him of his pain, he said he had been very comfortable since supper, and added, 'If I can only sleep, I shall do well;' but he was that night more restless than ever."

On Thursday morning he was arrested with a violent pain in the left breast, and immediately vomited blood, which was soon after repeated. Medical aid was called in, but in vain. It appeared that a blood-vessel had been ruptured, and his recovery was now beyond the reach of human skill.

At this awful period the reality of his religion was brightly manifested. No remorse for what he had done, no self-reproaches for not having acted from principle, embittered these solemn moments, but tranquillity of conscience, uninterrupted peace with God, and a cloudless prospect of heaven, were enjoyed, imparting dignity and triumph to his dying hours. During his whole affliction his partner had been much affected by the thought, that if an uncommonly sweet and heavenly frame of mind might be considered as a sign of an approaching change, she apprehended her dear husband would soon be called away. As she bent over his languishing frame, her heart sunk within her at the spectacle, and at the dreadful thought that their happy union was soon to be dissolved. She observes,—“He saw my distress, and looking earnestly at me as I gave him some cold water, said, ‘God is love, my dear.’ The girl called in a neighbour; two friends also came in, and I said to them, ‘He is dying.’ The soul of my dear husband appeared to be engaged with God, as he said, ‘Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.’ In a short time I repeated, ‘He is dying.’ He answered, ‘I am not dying, my dear; I am very easy.’ In a little while the vomiting came on more violently than ever, and as soon as he was able to speak, he said, ‘I am going to my Redeemer, I shall mount up with wings as eagles;’ and again, ‘If I am dying now, tell all the world that Jesus is precious.’ His whole soul appeared to be filled with divine power while he spoke, and he added, ‘He is working gloriously in my heart; glory be to God!’ A friend who was present said he would go for a physician: my husband answered, ‘No; no doctor; I want none but Jesus Christ.’ He went, however, soon after, and brought Dr. Storer; who thought if the vomiting did not return immediately, my husband would recover. He prescribed a blister and some medicine, but by the time they arrived, my husband was too weak to have them applied. When we were distressed at the thought of his sufferings, we heard him say, ‘As the afflictions of Christ abound, his consolations abound in my soul.’ His life was now wasting away very fast; he appeared sensible of it, and left a dying profes-

sion of his confidence in the goodness of the cause his heart had been engaged in. He said, 'What I have done in regard to the Methodist Connexion, so far from repenting, I rejoice in at this moment.' When in a yet more exhausted state, he observed, 'Some may say this is a judgment upon me; but what I have done in opposing the corruption in the church I believed my duty; I bless God that he made me an instrument of doing it. Oh, that I had done it more faithfully!' He gave some directions respecting his dear child, and expressed his wish that she might be brought up in the fear of the Lord. Mr. Sutton came in, and though my husband was too weak to speak out, he was so recollectful as to desire me to remind Mr. S. that a preacher should be provided for the chapel that evening. The last words he was heard to speak were, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' He then clasped his hands, and his soul appeared to be engaged with God. Soon after this, he turned towards me, and fixed his eyes upon me; I saw he was departing. My mind had till now been suspended between hope and despair, and I was silent; but now I began to speak to him. I saw his faithful soul was going to his Redeemer; and, in the fulness of my heart, declared, 'I would call on all the world never to seek happiness in anything but God. I assured him, if a human being could have given happiness, he had given it to me. I would bring his dear child with me to heaven: I told him my heart was fast bound to hers; we would join him again; we would fly to God for refuge; we would seek to glorify him; in him we should have peace.' I continued speaking to him till I was sure he was dead, but could not tell the moment when he ceased to breathe." *about 9 months*

Thus expired the devoted Kilham on the 20th of December, 1798, aged thirty-six. His death was unembittered by repentance for the past, and undismayed at the prospect of the future. His principles were felt to be sound when viewed in the light of eternity, and the foundation of his faith and hope found to be solid when nature was sinking into the arms of death. The dying scene of a Fletcher, or a Wesley, was not more dignified, triumphant, and glorious, than that of this martyr to truth and Christian freedom. If Mr. Wesley was permitted to glorify God by protracted labours in diffusing the truth, Mr. Kilham was permitted to glorify God—first, by indefatigable labours (not surpassed even by Mr. Wesley himself for the period) in the spread of truth; and secondly, by an early death, superinduced by his abundant zeal in the defence of the truth. His remains were deposited in Hockley Chapel, Nottingham, amidst a large concourse of deeply affected spectators.

CHAPTER II.

AN ESTIMATE OF THE REV. A. KILHAM'S CHARACTER.

THE facts presented in the preceding chapter, afford reason to abridge the limits of this one. They show the man in actual life, and furnish to every candid mind unmistakable evidence of his real character. We wonder not that Mr. Bramwell, on hearing of Mr. Kilham's death, should, with considerable emotion, exclaim to the effect, that "in Chris-

tian piety he had few equals, and as an honest, straightforward man, he had not left any superior behind him. A similar opinion was formed by all who thoroughly knew him. Had not his character been so violently assailed, and his motives so often been impugned by his adversaries, we might now pause; but justice both to himself and the Christian public, requires an analysis of his character.

1. *His personal piety.* His conversion was genuine, and his sense of the divine favour clear; his love for holiness, strong and ardent. His experience was a bright reflection of that blessed system of truths held by all evangelical Christians. While his conversion was sincere and genuine, his personal religion was not fitful, but constant and durable. Being united to Christ by living faith, he abode in him, and endured to the end. We have never found, from the examination of his manuscripts, any indication that he lost his sense of the divine favour or walked in doubt and uncertainty. His course was onward, and his "faith that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

His religion sustained him under reproaches, and rendered his excessive labours a pleasure. There was consolation in the one and enjoyment in the other, because he endured them for God. He says—

"I am now willing, through his grace, to bear reproach from any quarter, so that his glory may be advanced upon earth,—indeed, I expect to have my name cast out as evil. I look for crosses daily, and seek for a mind to bear them to the glory of God. By this means hard things become easy, rough ways are smooth, and my soul both sees and feels the salvation of God. The more I am resigned to the will of God, the more comfortable I feel in all the conflicts which Infinite Wisdom appoints. I frequently feel that my soul rejoices under the cross, because while we suffer for following Christ, the spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. I wish to learn to be content in every state, and to thank God for every affliction.

"It is our duty to endure hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. It is necessary that we should be sifted as wheat. Jesus Christ, however, prays for us; and while we have his intercession before God, we shall not be left comfortless: let us go, therefore, without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Writing to another person suffering under reproach, he observes:—"Perhaps no person has suffered more persecution, or had a more harassing life than I have for the last two years [since his trial and expulsion by the Conference in 1796]; and yet I have found, and do find, such happiness in the Lord Jesus as enables me to go on my way rejoicing. I commit my soul and my all to God, not fearing what men or devils can do against me. If all the world call me a hypocrite and a deceiver, God knows my heart, and reads truth and sincerity engraven upon it. I believe that he will be my defence and salvation for ever."

In another letter he remarks:—"The Lord seems to have set me at the hottest post, to endure reproach and shame for his sake; yet, amidst all, the cross of Christ is precious, and I am happy in being accounted worthy to suffer for his sake. Oh! that I may ever do it as a Christian. I long to be made perfect through suffering, that God may be glorified in my life and death. When I am fully engaged in preaching and writing, my soul rejoices to run its course. I am happy and comfortable in any

situation, and am full of inward satisfaction: I am conscious the Lord requires me to take the steps I am now pursuing, and therefore my heart rejoices, and my joy is frequently unspeakable and full of glory."

Writing to Mrs. Kilham from Wales only a short time before his last illness, he thus describes his enjoyment in the service of God:—"I sit down with pleasure to write to you; truly the Lord Jehovah is with us, the God of Jacob is our defence. Oh, that we could praise him for his goodness, and adore him for his love for ever! Surely my lines are fallen in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage. After morning preaching, I could not but weep for joy; the Redeemer appeared so precious, and his ways so delightful, that my mind was full of consolation. I was exceedingly busy writing till I went to the preaching; when I came to the place, I rejoiced to find so many present, and we had a comfortable season. It is impossible to express the joy I felt in seeking the salvation of my fellow-creatures."

Real religion must be possessed in order to yield enjoyment under the ordinary events of life; but to feel perfect resignation, and enjoy happiness under the complicated trials, bereavements, reproaches, and sufferings which Mr. Kilham was called to sustain, proved that his religion was not only genuine but deep.

His religion was also eminently practical, and entered into all the affairs and events of his life. It influenced and controlled his whole history. He acknowledged God in all his ways. He never wrote a controversial pamphlet but it was imbued with prayer, and generally a solemn prayer was appended to, and printed with the work, indicating the purity of his motive, his desire for the interests of religion, and his singleness of heart to glorify God.

His morality was elevated, his deportment honourable, pure, and unblemished. From the beginning to the end of his religious career, he walked in the commandments of God. We are not aware of a single instance in which he turned aside from truth and righteousness.

We have seen that the religion he enjoyed in the season of health and activity, rendered him triumphant in death. Had he not been influenced by the highest principles,—had selfishness, ambition, worldly policy, or any inferior motives, actuated his attempts at reforming Methodism, the dread shadow of death would have enveloped his last moments in despair, or tarnished them with self-reproaches and regrets; but no such feelings distressed or darkened his dying hour. The approval of his conscience imparted sweet serenity, the radiant smile of God inspired joyous emotions, the immediate prospect of heaven filled him with rapture. The dying exclamation, "I am going to my Redeemer, I shall mount up with wings as eagles," attests the sincerity and depth of his religion; and the testimony uttered as his spirit was entering the portals of eternity,—“What I have done in regard to the Methodist Connexion, so far from repenting of, I rejoice in it at this moment,” attests the excellence of his principles.

2. *In close alliance with his experimental and practical piety, stands his disinterestedness.* Some, who first encouraged but afterwards deserted him, have insinuated that he was influenced by the love of gain in issuing his controversial publications. But to designate the insinuation by its right name, we must pronounce it as false as it is mean. We never

knew any man who stood farther aloof from the desert of such an imputation. His whole conduct disproves it. Does the fact that he declined to accept any support for his wife during his whole connexion with the Wesleyan body indicate a selfish disposition? Does the fact that he subsequently contemplated the relinquishment of his whole salary, and support himself and family by the labour of his own hands, indicate a selfish disposition? Yet such was the generous conduct of Mr. Kilham. Have his accusers given the same manifestation of high and holy principle?

Personal interest in any shape was as far removed from the view of Mr. Kilham, as the sordid desire for pecuniary gain. He was influenced by public spirit, and all his movements for the reformation of Methodism were made in the expectation, not of emolument or honour, but of the sacrifice of them. He would never allow personal inconvenience, reproach, and loss to deter his efforts to promote the public good; he would never allow the prospect of personal advantages to obstruct or prejudice the cause with which he was identified. Occasions were not wanting when his principles were sufficiently tested. Had he preferred comparative ease to honourable toil, he might have found it when an Independent congregation requested him to become their settled pastor with a competent salary. Had he preferred the smiles and favours of those in power to truth and principle, he might have easily procured and retained them at the time when the leading ministers in the Methodist Connexion made him their confidant, and commended his early exertions. Had he preferred his own restoration to the Methodist body to the acquisition of the people's rights, he might have urged upon his friends and supporters his restoration as the first condition of peace with the body—as the first item in their negotiations with the Conference. But was it so? To his honour be it spoken, when their negotiations were pending with some hope of success on behalf of the people at the Conference of 1797, he would not allow the subject of his restoration to be mentioned in their petitions for freedom, lest it might prove in any degree an obstacle to their privileges. It had, indeed, been proposed at several meetings for appointing delegates, that Mr. Kilham's restoration to the body should be made one fundamental principle of any arrangement between the Conference and the societies; but Mr. Kilham, on hearing of this suggestion, at once insisted that nothing relating to his personal position in the body should be made a condition in their negotiations for peace and liberty. With a disinterestedness which showed him superior to all private and personal advantages, he said,—“*If the Conference will grant you all the privileges you have a right to demand, provided I am left out of the question, I should rejoice to be forgotten for ever, if peace on gospel terms could be established.*” Was this the language of a man who moved round his own circle, or whose views and purposes embraced the good of mankind? Does it evince the narrow and sordid mind of the selfish man, or utter the magnanimous sentiments of the martyr? Reason and justice will furnish an answer.

3. *The facts adduced abundantly prove also that Mr. Kilham was no schismatic.* It is evident, from his writings, that division formed no part of his plan. He loved Methodism with an ardour too sincere to desire its division. His whole soul was in harmony with its doctrines, with its general discipline, with its itinerancy, with everything but its churchism

and its despotic principles of government. A reformation and not a division was the object at which he aimed; and both his expulsion and the division which afterwards transpired, were results chargeable, not upon Mr. Kilham, but upon the Conference itself. Mr. Kilham would have rejoiced to live and die in the denomination, had he been allowed; even when excluded, he joined no other denomination, and organized no party, in the hope that a reformation would render such steps unnecessary; and he did all in his power, consistent with principle, to prevent a division at last. So late as the opening of Ebenezer Chapel, in May, 1797, we find him clinging to the hope that a division would be prevented; and in the preface to his published sermon, delivered on that occasion, he makes the following declaration:—"The managers of the chapel will cheerfully unite with the Conference next July, if they will grant them the privileges they have a right to claim. If the preachers should determine to oppose their measures, and resolve to rule without their interference, they will follow the openings of Divine Providence, and commit their cause to the Lord. No men under heaven can be more firmly attached to the cause of Methodism than the persons who have purchased this place. But they are fully persuaded that religious liberty is the birthright of every Englishman; and that they, as members of the Methodist Society, have a right to all the privileges which the gospel offers."

Mr. Kilham was no more a schismatic than were the apostles and early Christians when cast out of the Jewish synagogues for their testimony to the truth of Christ and their adherence to his holy cause.

4. *Courage and fortitude were conspicuous elements in Mr. Kilham's character.* Whilst he had no guide but principle, and no aim but the public good, he had courage to undertake whatever he believed to be his duty, and fortitude adequate to sustain him under all the consequences. In the exercise of his ministry, he quailed not before a persecuting rabble, and as the advocate of scriptural rights, he could face a Conference without dismay. He changed not with changing times. When deserted by professed friends he could stand alone. The truth was as precious to him in solitude as when sanctioned by numbers, when hated and opposed as when welcomed and supported. He could not prove perfidious to truth though others proved perfidious to him. He could not be diverted by flattery, nor would he succumb to power. Though amiable, affectionate, and generous in private life, he was inflexible as to principle. His abhorrence of both dissimulation and despotism sometimes led him, like Luther, to employ a severity of language which had been better spared. He could easily surrender his opinion on matters which pressed neither on his own conscience nor on the consciences of others, but the claims of conscience were sacred and inviolable; and rather than surrender these, reputation, friendship, popularity, emolument, and life itself could be sacrificed, and were sacrificed.

5. *In combination with courage, there was much energy in Mr. Kilham's character.* This arose partly from his clear convictions of truth and duty, which gave decision to his purposes; and partly from a warm temperament, which inspired earnestness in carrying them out; combined with activity of habits, which actuated him to vigour and diligence in prosecuting every object which engaged his mind. Whatever he saw

was right and proper, he pursued with a zeal worthy of its character. Feebleness, indecision, and slothfulness had no part in his composition, and were no features in his habits. In his studies, his ministerial labours, and his reforming efforts he was all alike—earnestness pervaded the whole, and carried him through an amount of labour that is really astonishing. What his hand found to do, he did it with his might; his meat and drink were to do the will of his heavenly Father, and to finish his work. His ruling passion was strong in death. In his expiring moments he remembered that an appointment would have to be supplied that evening, and requested that it might not be neglected. There can be no doubt whatever, but that he died a martyr to his excessive zeal in the cause of God and of his people. “The sword was too keen for its scabbard.”

6. *The intellectual character of Mr. Kilham.* His mind was above the common order. He had a quick perception, a retentive memory, and great facility both in making a subject his own, and in communicating it to others. He could easily see through a sophism, and with equal facility expose its fallacy by argument, and its absurdity by ridicule. His voluminous correspondence, his various publications, his manuscript sermons, and the multifarious productions of his pen, evince not only that he was a man of surprising industry, but of considerable talents and acquirements. Few ministers at the age of thirty-six, and with the limited opportunities he possessed, have left behind them such evidences of mental activity, indefatigable labour, and devoted zeal.

It is no small evidence of the penetration and vigour of Mr. Kilham's mind, that his views, almost from the first of his appearance as a writer on church politics, exhibit so much distinctness and maturity—a maturity which anticipated the progress of opinion in the Methodist world by half a century. Such a maturity shows that he was a man of penetration, of large and comprehensive views—that he had read ecclesiastical history and studied mankind to advantage.

Mr. Kilham has often been represented as holding revolutionary opinions on state politics. In this, as well as in other statements, he has been grossly calumniated. Secular politics had no concern whatever in the efforts of Mr. Kilham, nor in the origin of the Methodist New Connexion. As a matter of fact it may be here stated that there was far more reason to suppose that Dr. Coke, and others in the Methodist body, held revolutionary principles than there ever was to charge them upon Mr. Kilham. If it be desirable to know what Mr. Kilham's politics were, it may be stated that they were those held by such rational reformers as Earl Grey, Lord Erskine, Mr. Fox, and others of that school—principles which, though scouted in that day, have since been adopted by the intelligence of the nation, and incorporated as elements in the British Constitution.

Our limits forbid us enlarge. But we may say in conclusion, whether we view the Rev. A. Kilham as a man or a Christian, he was a sterling character. As a minister, he was wise to win souls, a workman that needed not to be ashamed. As a reformer of Methodism, he was sincere, consistent, and thorough. Pious, intelligent, holy, disinterested, upright, zealous, and devoted, his memory is worthy of being held in high and honourable estimation; and in proportion as the world has the discernment and the justice necessary to estimate moral excellence, will his character and principles receive their righteous meed of approval and

admiration. He adorned the gospel by the unsullied lustre of a holy life, he fought the battles of freedom for future generations, and he expired a champion and a martyr to the cause of truth and Christian liberty. Let the generation which has reaped where he has sown, and wears the laurels won by his labours and his life, cherish respect and gratitude for his memory, and be faithful to the privileges they enjoy.

The character of Mr. Kilham has been faithfully portrayed in the inscription on the marble monument which, soon after his demise, was raised to his honour.

To the Memory of
ALEXANDER KILHAM,
 MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,
 A FAITHFUL SERVANT IN THE VINEYARD OF CHRIST,
 A ZEALOUS DEFENDER OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE
 AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO FORCE ON THEM
 A PRIESTLY DOMINATION.
 DESERTED BY MANY OF HIS FRIENDS,
 HE LIVED TO SEE THE CAUSE FLOURISH
 IN WHICH HE DIED A MARTYR.
 IN PROMOTING THE GLORY OF GOD,
 AND THE HAPPINESS OF HIS BRETHREN,
 HE COUNTED NOTHING TOO DEAR A SACRIFICE :
 IN THIS PURSUIT,
 EASE AND INDULGENCE WERE DESPISED BY HIM.
 HIS LAST HOURS
 WERE PEACEFUL AND TRIUMPHANT,
 UNEMBITTERED BY A MOMENT'S REPENTANCE
 FOR HAVING OPPOSED CORRUPTION IN THE CHURCH ;
 HE BLESSED GOD
 THAT HE HAD MADE HIM INSTRUMENTAL IN DOING IT,
 AND ONLY REGRETTED
 THAT HE HAD NOT DONE IT MORE FAITHFULLY.
 COMMITTING HIS SOUL TO HIS REDEEMER,
 HE TOOK HIS FLIGHT TO A BETTER WORLD,
 DECEMBER 20TH, 1798,
 AGED 36.

CHAPTER III.

A STATEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN MR. KILHAM'S CONTROVERSY.

THE principles for which Mr. Kilham contended, present themselves under two classes:—

First, *Those involving liberty of conscience.*

Second, *Those involving ecclesiastical rights.*

The first class embraces the church question. Mr. Wesley, as we have stated before, had determined that Methodism should be merely a spiritual organization within the pale of the Establishment, and in ordinary cases, his people were not to have either preaching during the

hours of church service, or to receive the sacraments at the hands of their own ministers. Opposed to Dissent himself, he was resolved to make his people equally so, if possible. Mr. Kilham, on the other hand, contended for liberty of conscience. He did not degrade himself by any attempt to enforce uniformity of either opinion or practice in this respect, but asked for liberty, on behalf of both preachers and people, to act in conformity to their own convictions. He was indeed himself a thorough Dissenter, but all he contended for, as a matter of Conference legislation, was that those societies and congregations which desired to have worship at other hours more agreeable to their views, and more convenient to their circumstances, should be allowed that privilege; and those members who desired for conscience' sake to receive the ordinances from such of their preachers as were willing to administer them, should also enjoy the exercise of that liberty.

On this question we need not prolong an argument. The fact that the Wesleyan denomination has since conceded the privilege, admits the justice of the claim itself, and fully justifies Mr. Kilham's conduct in contending for it. The Conference has granted it because it was a scriptural right, and therefore to withhold it, was to violate that right. This is what Mr. Kilham pleaded for from the beginning, and yet for this he was censured by the Conference of 1792. Had he lived a few years longer, he would have seen the Conference sanction what it had previously condemned, and adopt what it had previously repudiated. The admission of the people's right to the sacraments, has been a blessing to Methodism. It has been sanctioned by the approval of God. The year it was denied by the decision of the lot, the Connexion lost three hundred members; and the first year it was granted, though under some restrictions, there was an increase of four thousand. Indeed history has made it manifest that adherence to Mr. Wesley's views and policy respecting the sacraments, would have entailed a perpetual injury upon Methodism; and the adoption of Mr. Kilham's views has proved one of its greatest blessings. But every reflecting mind will perceive, that if a departure from one part of his system has proved a blessing to Methodism, so may a departure from it in some other respects; and, at all events, the Conference having adopted a course so diametrically opposite to Mr. Wesley's system in one instance, cannot plead adherence to his authority and plan as a sufficient reason for resisting those changes which the times so urgently and imperatively demand.

The second class of principles for which Mr. Kilham contended, embraced certain ecclesiastical rights,—such as the following:—

1. That candidates for church fellowship should not be admitted by the preacher only, but by the consent and approval of the members of the church.

2. That an offending member should not be censured, expelled, or removed from office, merely by the preacher, but by the conjoint action of the minister and the people through the leaders' meeting.

3. That the appointment of persons to the office of society steward and leader, should not rest with the preacher alone, but with the free election of the church,—the leaders nominating, and the church or society, in conjunction with the minister, approving and appointing.

4. That the appointment of persons to fill the important office of

the ministry, whether local or itinerant, should not rest with preachers only, but with the preachers and people conjointly.

5. That in the district meetings, and the Annual Conference, there should be a fair representation of the people, by the presence of lay delegates, freely chosen for this purpose.

All these important items of reform were embraced in Mr. Kilham's plan, and are formally set forth in his outlines of a constitution. From these, it will be seen that he was for no partial measures; and could admit of no compromise. While he asserted the just prerogatives of the Methodist preachers as the true ministers of Christ, and as being entitled to perform all the functions of that sacred office, he was equally zealous that the people should enjoy all the privileges of a sound scriptural constitution.

It is proper here to state, that all these principles were incorporated in the system of discipline and church government of the Methodist New Connexion.

1. On the admission of a candidate for church fellowship, he is first approved by the leaders' meeting, and subsequently by the members of the church.

2. As a guarantee to personal liberty, no individual, whether church officer or private member, can be expelled, without being first convicted of guilt at a leaders' meeting. And not only must the conviction of guilt be established by proof to the satisfaction of a leaders' meeting, but the sentence itself, whether of censure, suspension, or expulsion, must be determined by the vote of the leaders' meeting. The official status and responsibility of local preachers and circuit stewards, rest with the quarterly meetings.*

3. On the appointment of a leader to a class, the rules require that he shall first be nominated by the leaders' meeting, and afterward approved by the class over which he is proposed to be appointed. In the appointment of a society steward, the nomination is with the leaders' meeting, the choice rests with a meeting of the church itself.

4. In the appointment of a local preacher, there must be the concurrence of the church through the leaders' meeting, and the sanction of the quarterly meeting.

5. No person can be recommended to Conference for the itinerant ministry, without the approval of the society of which he is a member, and subsequently of the quarterly or circuit meeting.

6. The leaders' meeting represents a society, and is composed of the leaders, the society stewards, a representative of trustees, and the circuit preacher.

7. The quarterly meeting is composed of the circuit preachers, circuit stewards, and the representatives freely chosen by the people. Any

* Yet, to guard against an abuse of this liberty, and to preserve purity of doctrine and morals in the Connexion, it is provided, that should the authorities of a circuit become so corrupt as to connive at guilt, and *refuse to exercise their own laws*, by retaining in office those who are convicted of immorality, or of subverting the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, and the laws of the Connexion, then to meet this emergency, the Conference itself, composed of the ministers and freely chosen representatives of the people, shall have power to remove the guilty parties from their *official station*. Yet, it is provided that no such power shall be exercised by Conference until the authorities in a circuit shall have *refused* to carry out their own discipline in such momentous cases,

other member has a right to be present, and give his views, subject, however, to the chair, but not to vote.

8. Our district meetings are composed of the ministers resident in the district, and of an equal number of laymen, freely chosen by the people at the quarterly meetings.

9. As an effectual guard against the influence of local prejudice or injury, both officers and members have the right of appeal to the quarterly meeting, and further, through the quarterly meetings to the Conference itself.

10. Our Annual Conference is composed on the principle of an equal number of preachers and lay representatives, freely chosen by the people; every circuit, *without exception*, being empowered to send both a minister and a layman, or, if it sees fit to send only one, to send a minister and a layman alternately. Some connexional officers, whose presence at the Conference is indispensable, and the legal guardians of the Connexion, have power to attend the Conference by virtue of their office. But here also due respect is had to that equality of representation which is the distinguishing principle of the Connexion.

11. Trustees of chapels, when their legal rights are concerned, are allowed a representative in Conference during the time their business is transacted.

12. The constitutional mode of access to Conference for the presentation of memorials and addresses, and for the expression of opinion on matters of church government, &c., is not straitened by vexatious restrictions; but is open not only to all district meetings, but to all quarterly or circuit meetings, in the Connexion, through which either circuits or individuals may freely present their views on all points affecting their own welfare, or that of the Connexion in general.

13. Apart from all desire to refer to any existing differences in other communities, it ought to be stated as a simple fact, that the Methodist New Connexion, neither in its Annual Conference nor in its local courts; neither in its laws nor its usages, knows anything of the principle of "*Question by penalty*;" but regarding that principle as odious, unjust, and inquisitorial, it expressly provides that in all cases affecting character and station, "*evidence on both sides shall be heard and impartially weighed, that righteous judgment may be administered in the fear of God.*"

14. Not assuming that our laws are infallible, or our system perfect, but capable of further improvement, it is expressly provided in the Deed Poll of the Connexion that, once in every seven years, the Connexion shall be empowered to revise, modify, and alter its laws, should the same be deemed necessary or desirable, either for its perfect freedom of action, the greater security of its privileges, or the energy and efficiency of its operations. We give the law itself:—"It shall and may be lawful for the Conference, and it is hereby authorized, at the end of every seven years from the date of these presents (1846), to consider the propriety of any change in the name or style of the said Methodist New Connexion, or any alterations or modifications of the constitution of such Conference, or in the system of the Methodist New Connexion or any part of it, which is hereinbefore described and set forth; and so periodically at the end of every succeeding seventh year, to be completed from the end of the preceding year, to consider the propriety of

making such alterations : provided always, nevertheless, that, before any such alterations or modifications are made, the nature and particulars thereof shall forthwith be published and submitted to the consideration of the circuits in the Connexion. But such alterations or modifications shall not be made, unless two-thirds in number of the members of the Annual Conference next ensuing, after such publication, shall decide upon the adoption of such alterations or modifications. Provided always, that nothing herein contained shall authorize and be construed to authorize the said Conference to change and controvert the doctrines and religious ordinances of the Connexion."—*Deed Poll*, p. 29.

This law exactly breathes our desire after progress, development, and perfection, our sincere and ardent wish to render our system in all things conformable to truth, equity, and freedom, adapted to society, powerful for good, innocuous for evil, approved of God, and endeared to our people. If we have one bad law, we would wish to have it repealed; if we have some laws that may be made better, we would wish them to be improved; and if any others are required to promote our efficiency, our harmony, our usefulness, and the further development of our mental and moral energies, we wish them to be incorporated. We have here the power to do this.

For a more ample statement of our principles, we refer the reader to the general rules of the Methodist New Connexion.

That these principles are sustained by reason, scripture, and the usages of the church, both in ancient and modern times, will form the subject of our inquiries in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ESTIMATE RESPECTING THE NATURE OF THESE PRINCIPLES.

ORGANIZATION implies law, order, and government; and in every organization of human beings, whether social or religious, the government must reside somewhere. In the subject under our immediate consideration, the question is, Whether the organized body shall be governed by such a constitution as admits the voice and influence of its members to operate through the whole economy; or, whether the government shall be absolutely transferred to one class of functionaries—leaving the one only to command, and the other nothing but submission and obedience. This is the gist and substance of the inquiry; and in endeavouring to estimate the merits of the question, we must try to ascertain which mode has the sanction of equity, safety, holy scripture, and the practice of evangelical churches, both in ancient and modern times.

If the question of equity and safety had to be determined by the sentiments entertained respecting different secular governments, a speedy verdict, we think, would be given in favour of the popular form.

In the history of mankind, we have specimens of every variety of government which can be conceived, and the impressions they have left on the human mind are too legible to be mistaken.

We have military government, in which the prerogative of the officer

is to command and the subaltern to obey. The authority of the one is absolute, and the submission of the other is implicit. Thus the subaltern drops his status, independence, and self-control as a man, and becomes changed into a mere automaton, to act just as the will of another may dictate. His own will, his liberty, his muscular energy, and his life, are placed under the absolute dominion of another. But it cannot be said that this government is unjust; for, besides the fact that the authority on the one hand, and the submission on the other, are necessary to perfect military order, they are the result of a well-understood compact between men. It is a commercial transaction, in which submission is yielded for a remuneration. The soldier has voluntarily sold himself to his master. He has made the surrender in consideration of receiving in return a regular supply of food, raiment, and wages. Such a government, however, can never be advocated as just and equitable for those who retain their birthright and their place in civil society as free men.

Yet an absolute monarchy bears a near approximation to military despotism. There have been monarchs, and still are, whose will is law, and who exercise an absolute and arbitrary authority over their subjects, making confiscation, banishment, and death the consequences of resistance to their dictum. Whatever veneration such a system might command in bygone days, that veneration has vanished before the dawn of intelligence and just views of human rights.

Various forms of oligarchy, in which the few have exercised domination over the many, have appeared at different periods, and have been variously distinguished, at times by mildness, but often by oppression and cruelty. But no form of oligarchy in which absolute and irresponsible power is assumed, or from which the voice of the governed is excluded, is now deemed compatible with justice and public safety.

The most intelligent, the most thoughtful, the most enterprising, and, we may add, the most religious nations of the age—the nations whose minds lead the world onward in the march of intellectual, moral, and religious improvement, have determined that no constitution but such as enables a community to govern itself by its freely chosen representatives, can be either wise, equitable, or safe. Whether the peculiar form of government be republican, like America, or a mixed monarchy, as that of England, is of little importance; but every obstacle which bars and shuts out the expression of public opinion, which excludes the subjects of a state from exercising due influence in its legislation, is regarded as an infringement upon the right of those subjects, and is incompatible with social order and public safety. The opinion is gone forth and is gaining ascendancy, and appears likely to acquire the fixedness of a political axiom, that every one whose sound intellect, good morals, and industrious habits help to build up and sustain the nation, has a right to his share of influence in the government, under such an economy as secures to him and the people of his class an ample representation.

If these sentiments were uttered only in outbursts of popular excitement; if these sentiments had no advocate but the agitating demagogue; if they were found only in alliance with ignorance and vice, then might they be regarded as dangerous indications, as excrescences upon the body politic, and symptomatic of moral disease: but when they are advocated by the most enlightened, philanthropic, and virtuous of men;

when they become developed with the progress of society; when they gain ascendancy just as light and truth become ascendant; when they move along with the emancipation of the slave, the diffusion of education, the amelioration of society, the circulation of the scriptures, and the spread of Christianity, we cannot but regard them as founded in truth and goodness, destined to continue as truth continues, to spread wider as truth spreads wider, and to triumph universally when the gospel shall be diffused universally. We fully agree with the enlightened observation of Dr. Dixon, "That the shoulders of individuals can no longer bear the weight of government, is clear enough; and that the people are indisposed any longer to give their allegiance to authority and power as a unit, is equally certain. That the church, and mankind at large, will fare better under the new development than the old, is a subject of general hope and expectation; and the lover of mankind may indulge the anticipation with glowing exultation."

If there be any analogy between secular and ecclesiastical government—between the rights and privileges of a citizen and the rights and privileges of the member of a Christian Church, then the question as to whether equity and safety be on the side of spiritual despotism or of a popular and representative government, may be regarded as settled. We are aware, indeed, it has been maintained that the analogy between secular and ecclesiastical governments does not hold, so as to justify this inference. We believe, however, that there is a very general analogy between them, and that the points of difference, where they exist, only strengthen the argument against a despotic government in the church.

In the church, as well as in the state, the design of government is the good of the community, not the aggrandizement of individuals. We know of no natural rights which a Christian man surrenders in the church. Natural rights, like moral duties, are unchangeable. They belong to man as man, whether he be a subject of the realm, or a member of the Christian Church. If it be so, can it be wise or just to require him to surrender them?

While a man's rights are thus retained, his capacity to exercise them is not diminished, but ordinarily increased, by his religion. He is not deteriorated, but elevated by his piety. There is more intelligence in the head, more sobriety of judgment, and more powerful principle in the heart of a pious Christian, than of a good citizen. If before conversion he was fitted to exercise his natural right in the state, he is better fitted now to exercise his right in the church. Where, then, is the wisdom and equity of a system which denies the exercise of that right?

Again. While his natural rights are unimpaired and unabridged by his connexion with the church, and while his capacity to exercise them is undoubtedly improved by his religion, his interests in the church are tenfold dearer, and his responsibilities a hundredfold greater, than they can be in the state. No interests, indeed, can be so dear to him as those associated with and springing from his connexion with the church; and no responsibilities so important and solemn as those arising from his relation to the Church of God. But these interests and responsibilities involve both the right of action and the power to exercise it. Can it then be wise and equitable to deny those rights and to exclude those powers? What an anomalous and incongruous position must

this be, in which to place a man! What confusion must result therefrom!

Let us now see how this argument will apply to several particular aspects of church membership. First, in reference to equity.

1. To an individual connected with a religious denomination, his status as a member is a matter of immense importance. His character as a Christian, the enjoyment of fraternal fellowship, the blessed privileges of the sanctuary, and his opportunities for usefulness, are all bound up with his standing as an accredited member; and it is clear he has a right to the full enjoyment of all these privileges, so long as he walks according to the gospel. Can it, then, be right and equitable that all these should be suspended upon the dictum of one individual?—and yet they are thus suspended while the power of excision is vested in a single official. Interests so precious, privileges so ineffably important, and connexions so valuable, that no earthly possessions are for a moment to be compared with them, may at once be destroyed by the breath of a poor peccable worm who happens to be vested with the insignia of office and the awful powers of excommunication. Can it be wise and just thus to jeopardize a man's highest interests, by exposing them to the influence of prejudice, party feeling, personal hostilities, or caprice? Candour may anticipate the answer which intelligence and Christian feeling would supply to the inquiry. No sophistry can turn the edge of this argument. It is in vain to say that pastors are not likely to be influenced by any considerations but the public good. They are but men, and are subject to the influences to which human nature is exposed; and we have seen enough to prove that, in many cases where the terrible power of excommunication is exercised, a man's status as a member of a Christian Church depends neither upon his morality, his piety, his usefulness, his esteem by the brethren, nor upon all these put together, but upon the views and prejudices of the pastor whose fiat is Methodistical life or death. Again we ask, Is it wise and equitable for the case of a man to be thus? or should not the status of every member depend upon the conjoint decision of the minister and the church, either collectively, or through its chosen representatives?

2. Take another aspect of this argument. The member of a Christian Church sustains, we have said, solemn responsibilities; and it is an axiom that a man's responsibilities and powers of action should be commensurate with each other. He is responsible, in his associated capacity, not only for his own character, but for the character of others. He shares in the honours or reproaches of the church with which he is identified. If the church be defiled and dishonoured by the admission of unworthy members, he, as a member, is both pained and disgraced. But when a man sustains an exposure to such consequences, should he not have an influence to guard against them? Yet, if the reception of members rest with an official, to the exclusion of the church itself, that church can have no such influence to prevent the consequences. It is exposed to injury and degradation, but has no power to protect itself against them. We ask, then, is such an economy wise and equitable?

A similar course of reasoning applies to the retention of unworthy members, when the power of expulsion is denied to the church, and exercised by an individual. Here favouritism, family interests, and

personal considerations may operate to the injury and corruption of a church; and who will not admit that these motives are far more likely to operate upon an individual than upon a collective body?

3. This train of argument applies also to many other cases,—the appropriation of funds. Where contribution is a duty, it follows that a wholesome share of influence in its appropriation should be possessed. Else how can there be an effectual guard against corruption?

4. In the election of church officers. Nothing can be more important to the purity, efficiency, and prosperity of the church than the election of suitable officers. Negligence or favouritism here may produce pernicious consequences. If, then, a member be interested in the welfare of his church,—if he be in some considerable degree responsible for its purity and prosperity, can it be wise or just to exclude him from a proper share of influence, either personally or by representation, to secure the election of suitable men? The welfare of his own soul, and the welfare of the church for a series of years, may be promoted or retarded by the choice that may be made even in one single instance. With whom, then, should the power of that choice rest—with a single official, or with the church itself? Let reason and equity decide. Responsibilities and powers of action must go together. The hand that severs them, unrighteously severs what God has ordained should be inseparably united.

5. With equal force does the argument apply to the administration of the more general concerns of the body, especially in a community where the *Connexional* principle binds and confederates all the churches into such a perfect identity of interests as we see in Methodist denominations. So intimate is the union, so identical are the interests, so reciprocal are the influences exerted by each portion of the body, that if one suffer, all suffer. The sympathies, therefore, of an enlightened, pious Methodist, are peculiarly excited respecting the welfare of every portion of his community. Moreover, all being governed by the same laws, supplied by the same ministers, and subject to the same authority of an annual assembly, each member has the right of exercising an influence in that assembly, and though he cannot be personally present, he has a right, in connexion with his brethren of the same church, to be represented in that assembly. If he be responsible for obedience to the laws of a Conference, for yielding submission to its administration, and for contributing to its objects, this responsibility connects with it the right of representation. Nor can this representation be effected by ministers alone. For, not to dwell upon the fact that their isolated position and their short continuance in a circuit sometimes prevents a perfect acquaintance with all local circumstances, they are individuals of a class, and reason and justice forbid that the powers of legislation should be vested in any peculiar class of church officers. By what law or logic can it be supposed that ministers are to be the sole and absolute legislators of a community? This is to convert shepherds into despots. It is alike irrational and unjust. If all interests are to be represented, and if impartial legislation and administration are to be exercised for all classes, then should each class be represented by a mixed assembly of both ministers and laymen, freely chosen by the people.

6. Nor is there any degradation in a mixed association of this kind. This idea has been insinuated by those unfriendly to the people's liber-

ties, but it is a monstrosity. We wonder how Christian men can for a moment entertain, much more express, a notion so despicable. It is degrading to harbour the thought. It savours as much of barbarism as of pride. If laymen, so called, are deemed competent to exercise the spiritual functions of prayer-leader, class-leader, and preacher, in what sense can they be viewed as such secular beings as to be deemed unfit to assist in the less sacred functions of legislation? If they can sit by the side of a minister in local courts, in a leaders' and quarterly meeting, without defiling him, why cannot they take their place by his side in the Conference? As neither intelligence, nor piety, nor capacity for business, is confined to any class, it is no disparagement to the ministry to say that there are in the laity men equally intelligent, equally gifted, equally pious, and equally competent to public business with ministers. While reason and justice assert their right to unite with ministers in the functions of legislation and administration in a religious body, Providence has asserted their qualification by the bestowment of equal gifts.

7. We are aware it may be replied that a minister has interests and responsibilities too, as well as the members of a Christian Church, and therefore he ought to possess corresponding power and authority. We admit the statement, but contend that, on the principles asserted, he *has* the requisite power and authority. As the minister of his people, he exercises a pastoral oversight; he presides at all meetings; he brings forward all measures; he unites with the elders and brethren in all deliberations; he states and explains all the laws, divine and conventional, by which proceedings are regulated; he performs the solemn executive in the reception and expulsion of members, in the appointment of officers, and all acts of discipline; he preaches the word; he reproofs, exhorts, and rebukes; and in every department he exerts a moral influence proportionate to his character and station as an ambassador for God. In all things his powers are commensurate with his duties and responsibilities, and herein is equity. But to invest him alone with the awful prerogatives of receiving and expelling members; of appointing and removing officers; of calling into, and casting out men from, the holy ministry; of making laws; of requiring submission or enforcing excommunication, is to load him with responsibilities which he is unfitted to sustain, and to require him to exercise powers which he is unfitted to wield. Such a system is doubly unjust—unjust to the minister himself, by imposing upon him a burden too enormous to be borne, and unjust to the members, by causing them to groan under an oppressive and intolerable yoke. It converts the gentle pastor into an arbitrary despot, and the people into a set of slaves.

We next inquire, Is there safety in the principles for which we contend? We reply, Yes, for the reasons already assigned—They are wise and just.

1. *There is safety to the pastorate itself.* We know the corrupting influence of arbitrary power. While it blinds the understanding, it depraves the affections, and transforms the merciful shepherd into a cruel and iron-hearted tyrant. The history of popes and cardinals is before us. A liberal government, in which the power of the people is associated with that of the pastor, removes at least this temptation to degeneracy.

2. *It is safe also to the liberties of the body politic.* Arbitrary powers

vested in a body of ecclesiastics have often made monarchs tremble, and enthralled whole nations in bondage. Is not the history of the Popedom a tissue of aggressions upon civil liberty, of usurpations by the spiritual powers against man's inalienable secular rights? Is not the Reformation a recovery from this usurpation of human rights?

3. *It is safe for the privileges of church members.* Would a people continue in the enjoyment of their liberties, they must never part with the power that retains them. They must never surrender them to the hands of another. Here only is safety. In surrounding events there is a loud and admonitory voice.

4. *It is safe for the church's existence and prosperity.* It is true indeed that some absolute monarchies have long survived, but it was during the night of darkness, when intellect slumbered and truth was buried. When the day of intelligence dawned, they melted away, or changed their character with the times. Despotism cannot live in the sunlight of knowledge. The most ignorant nations are the most enthralled, both by secular and ecclesiastical power. The most intelligent nations are the most free; the most intelligent churches have the most liberal constitution. Intelligence and freedom always march abreast of each other, and always dwell together. They are inseparable. The universal diffusion of light will bring about the universal prevalence of freedom, and chase the last vestige of despotism at the same moment it dispels the last cloud of ignorance.

If, then, progression be the destiny of mankind, the fate of despotic power is sealed; its death-knell is heard. If the principles of truth and justice are to be ascendant over individual man, they must be ascendant also over all organized communities; and in this the certain ruin of all despotic systems is predicted. What mean the upheavings of society around us? They are the conflicts of heterogeneous elements—of light with darkness, of truth with error, of justice with oppression, of right with might, and the issue is not uncertain. He whose name and whose nature are essentially allied to truth and justice, has decreed their triumph, and therefore destruction or reformation is the fate of all systems which crush the true liberties of man.

Our next inquiry is into the scriptural character of the principles we have stated. What saith the scriptures? What is the utterance of the holy oracle? For if its decisions were against us, we should confess our folly, withdraw all our conclusions, and at once submit to its infallible dictates. But they harmonize with reason; they sustain our conclusions. Here let it be observed, that we do not contend for a perfect resemblance of form and mode between the details of our system of church government, and that which obtained in apostolic times, but for such a conformity, in great principles and general outline, as presents a substantial resemblance.

In the sacred scriptures, the church is represented not as a class of officers, but as a congregation of persons who receive the gospel, and acknowledge Christ as their head. The power to govern is described not as resting absolutely in one or a few persons, but in the body as a whole—the executive being entrusted or delegated to a few; but the power being with the whole.

It is admitted by the most eminent writers on ecclesiastical polity,

that the New Testament plan of church government is based upon the platform which had previously existed in the Jewish Church; in which the administration was conducted under an economy which combined popular suffrage with virtual representation by lay elders; and the ministry, superintendence, and presidency of a chief ruler. Richard Watson, whose sentiments we quote because his testimony will be regarded as independent of all party influence in favour of this argument, observes—

“Much light is thrown upon the constitution of the primitive churches, by recollecting that they were formed very much upon the model of the Jewish synagogues. We have already seen that the mode of public worship in the primitive church was taken from the synagogue service, and so also was its arrangement of offices. Each synagogue had its rulers, elders, or presbyters, of whom one was the angel of the church, or minister of the synagogue, who superintended the public service, directed those that read the scriptures, and offered up the prayers, and blessed the people. The president of the council of elders or rulers was called, by way of eminence, the ‘Ruler of the synagogue;’ and in some places, as Acts xiii. 15, we read of these ‘rulers’ in the plural number; a sufficient proof that one was not elevated *in order* above the rest. The angel of the church, and the minister of the synagogue, might be the same as he who was invested with the office of president; or these offices might be held by others of the elders. Lightfoot, indeed, states that the rulers of each synagogue were three, whilst the presbyters or elders were ten. To this council of grave and wise men, the affairs of the synagogue, both as to worship and discipline, were committed. In the synagogue they sat by themselves in a semicircle, and the people before them, face to face. This was the precise form in which the bishop and presbyters used to sit in the primitive churches.” With this agree a host of erudite authorities.

We have here, then, the minister or angel of the church, and the presbyters or rulers associated with him in government and administration. That some of these presbyters or elders were of that class denominated the *laity*, is evident from the fact that they did not preach or exercise the functions of the ministry at all. Hence the Apostle Paul commands, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” Here is plainly a recognition of *two* classes of elders, and a distinction between them broadly marked—those who merely ruled, but did not preach, and those who both ruled and preached the word. The one was of the class denominated the *ministry*, the other of the class called the *laity*. They were, however, both rulers—in this respect there was no distinction. This perfectly accords with other passages where the office of ruling is referred to as being vested in men who, in the same manner, are distinguished from those that preach the gospel. (1 Cor. xii. 28, 29, 30.)

It will now be shown that these lay and ministerial rulers derived their power from the suffrages of the members of the church, and that the several parts of their administration were performed in conjunction with, and not independent of, the action of the people.

1. *Respecting members.* Was their reception and expulsion performed by the pastor alone, or any officials, irrespective of the voice of the church. Certainly not. The body of believers at Rome are thus

addressed—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. . . . Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. . . . Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (Rom. xiv. 1-3; xv. 7; xvi. 17.) The right of the church, and not of a few officers, to receive members within her communion is here distinctly recognised.

Equally clear is it that in the expulsion of unworthy members there was the concurrence and sanction of the church. When discipline had to be exercised upon the incestuous person in the church at Corinth, on whom does the apostle call to perform the solemn duty of excommunication? Does he address the pastor or ruling elders exclusively? He addresses the *whole* church—including members and officers. "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. v. 1-5.)

Here the power of the expulsion rested with the whole church, and, although the executive would be performed by the officer or officers, the sanction and concurrence of the members were undoubtedly expressed, for when the solemn deed of excision had been performed, the apostle refers to it as the act of "*many*," and, while he commends the whole church for the fidelity thus exercised, he exhorts the same to restore the penitent to their communion and affection. "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted by many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things."

It does not invalidate the argument to affirm that this act of discipline was performed at the command of Paul; for it is evident that the authority of an apostle was unique, and belonged to *none* but apostles; and as they have no successors in office, so they have no successors in authority and power. Besides, after all, the act was performed by the church, and had Paul been present, it would doubtless have been performed not by his exclusive prerogative, but in conjunction with the church. This is in exact accordance with the teaching of our Lord in a passage which distinctly recognises the power of the church, and not merely of its officers. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three wit-

nesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church : but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt. xviii. 15-17.)

Thus the reception and rejection of members in the New Testament, rest not exclusively with pastors or officials, but with the united church.

2. *The election of church officers.* Was this prerogative vested in the pastor or presbyters alone ; or was the concurrence of the church also necessary ? Let the scriptures speak, and they will show that so far from this being the case, even the apostles themselves required the people to unite with them in this important act—the people choosing and the apostles ordaining. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." (Acts vi. 1-6.)

We find also that not only deacons were thus elected by "the whole multitude of disciples," but an apostle, when a vacancy was occasioned in the number by the apostacy of Judas, was elected by the disciples. It is stated that about one hundred and twenty persons were present, when, after Peter's prayer, "They gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." (Acts i. 15-26.)

This election by popular suffrage to the most important offices of the *Christian Church*, is in exact accordance with the practice of the ancient Jewish Church; for, when a council of elders was required to be united with Moses in the functions of judging, that venerable council was chosen by the people. The Jewish lawgiver, adverting to this fact, observes:—"I spake unto you at that time, saying . . . Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you," &c. (Deut. i. 13-15.) Josephus, the Jewish historian, affirms that "all public affairs were transacted in the synagogue, the people having been consulted;" and that "the very legate of the Sanhedrim consulted with the people of Tiberius, as to removing him from office."

3. While the power of thus electing men to the most important offices rested with the united church, even the power of rejecting unworthy ministers was a right also exercised by the church; and we find this right sanctioned by the inspired writings. "If there came any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2 John 10.) Paul addressing the Galatian Church thus declares, "but though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed." To give emphasis to this declaration, he solemnly repeats it; and what is here implied, but a recognising of the right of the church to cast out,

reject, and anathematize an heretical teacher, even though he were an apostle? (Gal. i. 8, 9.)

4. When the contributions of churches had to be sent and appropriated, the apostles would not undertake the task themselves, but directed the church to send messengers of their own to carry the fruit of their bounty.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4.) "Thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind. Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." (2 Cor. viii. 16-21.)

5. *In the New Testament we find a higher court of legislation—a Council or Synod, but in its constitution we see the same principle carried out—the ministry and laity combined.* To save our space, we request the reader to open his New Testament, and read carefully the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Here he will mark four important features in this assembly—the subject for discussion—the constitution of the assembly—the united decision of apostles, elders, and brethren—and the recorded sanction of the Holy Ghost to the whole proceedings. With these facts before him, let him judge whether a Conference consisting of ministers alone, or composed of ministers and laymen, has the sanction of the New Testament.

Here was a conference, the first conference held in the Christian Church. Now, what was the subject for discussion? It was one of a spiritual nature, and intimately connected with the *spiritual* interests of the Church of God. It was, indeed, just such a subject as many would suppose laymen were the least qualified to determine—a subject which might be supposed to belong to the apostles alone. Certainly, if any topic could require the exclusion of the laity, this was one.

But of whom was this council composed? Was it of apostles alone? It was not. Was it of apostles and elders alone, in their united capacity? It was not: but it was composed of apostles, elders, and brethren, who, being synonymous with the "*church*" or the *multitude* (as in verses 4, 12, 22), were evidently the *laity*—the people. For it is stated that when the apostles and brethren came from Antioch to Jerusalem, they were received by the church, as well as by the apostles and elders; a fact which indicates the exercise of a voice in this matter. Hence we read, "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders," &c. (v. 4.)

When the subject was discussed, the laity were present, and took a part in the proceedings. Hence it is said, "Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." (v. 12.)

When the decision of this important question was taken, it was done by the united voice of the apostles, elders, and *brethren* of the laity. "Then pleased it the apostles, and elders, and the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas." (v. 22.)

When the epistle, containing the determination of this council, was sent to Antioch, it was sent in the name, not of the apostles alone, nor in the name of apostles and elders only, but in the conjoint names of apostles, elders, and *brethren*. "And they wrote letters by them after this manner; the apostles, and elders, and *brethren*, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia." "It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you," &c.

It should be noted, too, that the constitution and proceedings of this assembly had the sanction of the Holy Ghost. This is recorded, as if to fix the visible impress of Jehovah's approval of such an assembly before the eye of the church in all future ages. It is expressly said, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us," &c. We know not how language can more clearly set forth the union of the laity with the ministry in the highest court of the church, and in deciding questions of the highest spiritual interest. It should be remembered that this synod or conference occurred when the church was in its virgin purity, and specially guided by the Holy Ghost. It should be remembered, too, that these things were written for our learning,—for our instruction and reproof.

We have, then, the plain and unequivocal testimony of holy scripture, sustaining the deductions of reason and the claims of justice, in favour of a free and popular constitution of government in the Church of God, and in palpable opposition to those official and exclusive prerogatives which are assumed by some.

6. To these clear and explicit proofs of holy scripture, must be added the many solemn admonitions addressed to ministers against the assumption of unjust and arbitrary power. They are not to act "as lords over God's heritage, but to be ensamples to the flock." (1 Peter v. 3.) Even the apostles themselves disclaimed "to exercise dominion (or lordship) over men's faith;" but, on the contrary, desired "to be helpers of their joy." (2 Cor. i. 24.) The severe rebuke against the shepherds of Israel was that, instead of strengthening the diseased, healing the sick, binding up that which was broken, and restoring the lost, they "had ruled with force and cruelty the flock of God." (Ezek. xxxiv. 4.) The Man of Sin is but a personification of priestly power and authority, of prodigious growth, usurping the prerogatives of Heaven, and trampling under foot the liberties of the saints. All such representations utter solemn admonitions against every incipient encroachment of priestly power. He that tramples on the rights of man, does despite to the image of God.

Is it asked, What guarantee, then, is there to ministers, that, in the operation of these liberal principles, their just prerogatives will not be

invaded, and their authority resisted? We reply—the abuse of any principle is no argument against its intrinsic wisdom and goodness. Else, the tables might be turned against the objector with terrible effect. We have to ascertain what is true, what is wise, just, and scriptural! This ascertained, its adoption is imperative. A thousand objections derived from human fears and human conjectures, or even from facts, have no weight against the testimony of Heaven. Yet we may always rest assured the way of duty is the way of safety. We need not fear for any result from obedience to God's own commands. The principles he enjoins will work a happy issue. They have his promised blessing. Moreover, should a minister in our body realize any practical grievance from obstruction in the path of duty, he has higher courts of appeal open to his complaint, the quarterly meeting, and finally the Conference itself, where his just authority will be sustained. Every fear on this point is groundless, as every objection is fallacious.

The usages of evangelical churches in general, both ancient and modern, are in harmony with the facts adduced from the sacred scripture, proving that Christians, in all ages and in all countries, have drawn the same general principles from the word of God, and felt bound to conform to them in their practice. We regret that our narrow limits impose brevity on a subject which might be expanded with advantage. Historical notices in the ancient church crowd upon our attention. We select a few of the more prominent.

Clement lived in the first century, and in his epistle to the Church at Corinth, written about the year 96, or, as some say, between the 60th and 70th year of the Christian era, speaking of the appointment of bishops (or ministers), says they were ordained "*by eminent men with the consent of the whole church.*"

So with respect to the election of elders by the church, we have the testimony of Tertullian, who in his apology for Christians against the heathen, A.D. 198 or 205, says that the elders came into their office by the *testimony* of the people, that is, by the suffrage or election of the people. Their free and independent suffrages were the highest testimony which the people could give of the approbation of their elders.

With regard to doctrines, as well as church officers, the voice of the laity, in unison with that of the clergy, was appealed to. Thus Eusebius informs us that when Paulus Samosatenus was condemned by the great synod at Antioch, the assembly was composed of "bishops, presbyters, deacons, and the churches of God." (Euseb. b. vii. c. 30.) By the "churches of God" must be meant laymen who represented the several churches, as it would have been quite impossible for so many churches, *en masse*, to be present. Now this was in harmony with apostolic usage. Again, we read in the fifth book of Eusebius, that when the heresy of the Montanists had spread itself, "The faithful met together often, and in many parts of Asia, and having examined the heresy, denounced it." (Euseb. b. v. cap. 16.)

The same reference to the voice of the people in conjunction with the ministry, was made in determining the reception of members, which is plain from the testimony of Cyprian, who lived in the third century.

When some who had fallen from their steadfastness, were employing improper means to get restored to the church, Cyprian, then in exile,

writes to his church, saying, that "the lapsed should wait in patience until God had restored peace to the church, when there should be convened a synod of bishops, and of the people who had remained steadfast during the persecution, who should consult together and determine respecting the matter." (Cyprian, Epist. 14.) Moses and Maximus, to whom Cyprian had written on this subject, wrote in reply, approving the caution of the bishop, and expressed their concurrence with his proposal of "consulting a synod of all the bishops, presbyters, deacons, confessors, and the standing laity." (Cyprian, Epist. 26.) The clergy of the Church of Rome also expressed their willingness that this question respecting apostates should be decided "by the united council of the bishops, presbyters, deacons, confessors, and the standing laity." (Cyprian, Epist. 31.)

The ancient church exhibits also a conjunction of the laity with ministers in synods and general councils. - This indeed is evident from the quotations already adduced, to which we add another from Cyprian. When the great council was held at Carthage in the year 258, there was the same union of the laity with the clergy and ecclesiastical dignitaries in discussing and deciding the affairs which came before them; for "there were present many bishops from various parts, with presbyters, deacons, and a great part of the laity," on that memorable occasion. (Cyprian, p. 443.)

Thus, if there be any weight in the usage of the churches of antiquity, it is all in favour of the principle adopted by our forefathers; and, as this usage corresponds exactly with the usage of the church in apostolic times, it was doubtless taken from its example. We are not aware, indeed, of any council being held from which the laity were excluded.

We might adduce other examples from the writings of the fathers, but they will be deemed unnecessary. The present suffice to show, that in the admission of members, in the election of bishops or ministers and deacons, in the decisions respecting doctrine, it was an established usage to consult the people, while synods and general councils were composed of ministers and laymen as in apostolic times.

Hooker, the celebrated writer on ecclesiastical polity, affirms that "the general consent of all is requisite for the ratification of the laws of the church. 'Laws could they never be, without the consent of the whole church to be guided by them; whereunto both nature and the practice of the Church of God set down in scripture, is found so consonant, that God himself would not impose his own laws upon his people by the hands of Moses without their free and open consent.'"

Mosheim, the ecclesiastical historian, speaking of the usages of the ancient church, testifies respecting the *people* that "with them resided the power of enacting laws, as also of adopting or rejecting whatever might be proposed in the general assemblies, and of expelling and again receiving into communion any depraved or unworthy members. In a word, nothing whatever, of any moment, could be determined on, or carried into effect, without their knowledge and concurrence."

Lord King, as the result of his very elaborate researches into the writings of the fathers respecting the constitution of the ancient church, makes the following decisive statement:—"I find that, in general, all things relating to the government and policy of the church were per-

formed by the *joint consent and administration of the clergy and laity*; the people were to do nothing without the bishop. And, on the contrary, he did nothing without the knowledge and consent of his people. When any letters came from foreign churches, they were received, and read before the whole church, and the whole church agreed upon common letters to be sent to other churches. And so for all other matters relating to the policy of the church; they were managed by the common advice and counsel of the clergy and laity; both concurred to the discharge of these actions.

“From this different attribution of the power of the keys, we may infer this, that it was so lodged both in bishops and people, as that each had some share in it: the bishop had the whole executive, and part of the legislative power; and the people had part in the legislative, though not in the executive. As for the executive power, by which I understand the formal pronouncement of suspensions and excommunications, the imposition of hands in the absolution of penitents, and such like, that could be done by none but by the bishop, or by persons in holy orders, deputed and commissioned by him, as the sequel will evince. But as for the legislative, decretive, or judicatorial power, that appertained both to *clergy and laity*, who conjunctly made up that supreme consistorial court, which was in every parish, before which all offenders were tried, and, if found guilty, sentenced and condemned.”

As we pursue our inquiry onwards, we find indeed an alteration, but it was a degeneracy. We find the natural rights and the scriptural privileges of the church gradually encroached upon by an ambitious hierarchy; but this usurpation as to the rights of man was marked by a similar usurpation of the prerogatives of God. Divine authority and human freedom were trampled upon at the same moment and by the same men. The assumption of priestly power proceeded hand in hand with corruption in doctrines, in worship, and in morals. All these evils grew up together, until the Man of Sin and the mystic Babylon stood forth, revealed in all their monstrosity,—the greatest foes to the liberties of man, the foulest disgrace to the Christian name, the most powerful adversaries to true religion, and the most abhorrent, in the sight of heaven of any systems of evil which have marked the history of our world.

On the other hand, just in proportion as any section of the church has retained its purity in doctrine and experimental religion, it has retained its liberty; and when a church has recovered from its impurities in doctrines and in morals, it has broken the chains of spiritual despotism, reformed its legislation, and approached the model of New Testament freedom. The Vaudois Churches still retain a popular form of government, because they retain their original doctrines. In the Lutheran Churches lay influence and suffrage are recognised and exercised, though connected with some unhappy characteristics of subjection to the secular state. In the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and especially in the Free Church, a constitution exists which combines lay suffrage with ministerial authority.

Among the Independents a still more popular system of government obtains. Dr. Davidson remarks:—

“The judicial and executive powers are originally vested in the

church, which transfers the latter to overseers or pastors who carry the laws into effect. The aggregate assembly retains the judicial functions with which it has been entrusted by Jesus Christ; while a council composed of select members, are empowered to execute the decisions made in accordance with the sovereign laws. Thus a church has all the functions necessary to a well-balanced constitution, distributed, too, in such a manner as to secure general liberty."

Even the Established Church of England acknowledges the principle of lay influence and representation, as the constitution of the Houses of Parliament renders manifest; but its unhappy connexion with, and subordination to the state, prevented a reversion to the simplicity of original government, and to that popular freedom which prevailed in apostolic times.

The present commotions in the Established Church have extensively revived a desire for a convocation; and should a convocation be summoned, there can be little doubt it will be composed of the laity as well as clergy. This, indeed, is demanded, not only by many intelligent and pious members of the church, but is contemplated by the highest dignitaries of the church. Not long since the Bishop of Chichester stated to his clergy—"It may be interesting to you to learn, that if a synod of the church be assembled in convocation or otherwise, it is the unanimous opinion of the whole bench of bishops, without a single exception—I repeat it—*without a single exception*, that there should be a considerable infusion of the lay element in its constitution." We ask whence arises this spontaneous desire, on the one hand, among the members of the church, and this unanimous opinion, on the other, among the bishops themselves, respecting one object—the infusion of the lay element in the most important assemblage of the Church of England—but from the deep and prevalent conviction among all classes of society, that the conjunction of the laity with the ministry in the affairs of the church is required by equity, by safety, and the authority of sacred scripture.

From the evidence adduced, it is obvious that any system which excludes the laity from a voice in the reception and rejection of members, in the choice of officers and ministers, in the affairs of general discipline, and especially one which shuts out the laity from the high court of legislation, is contrary to equity, repugnant to holy scripture, and opposed to the general usages of evangelical churches in both ancient and modern times; and while thus without the support of divine authority or the sanction of human example, it contains within itself the elements of dissatisfaction and of ultimate dissolution. In a land of free institutions, and amid the progress of enlightened sentiments, no such system can stand. It must be reformed or destroyed. But every lover of good men, every one who longs for the advancement of truth and holiness, will cherish the hope and offer up the prayer, that the former and not the latter alternative may be the destiny of any existing community. This hope we cherish, and this prayer we devoutly and earnestly offer to Almighty God.

There is a remarkable fact in connexion with the history of Methodism, which bears with considerable weight upon the question of church government. It is this—that every secession, of any magnitude, from

the Wesleyan body, has retained its doctrines and ordinances, but rejected its despotic* system of government.

Our own community stands first as the oldest secession from the parent community. Every doctrine and every ordinance of Methodism, we retain and love. Our sole difference is in church polity. The Primitive Methodist body originated in 1811; its founders, like the devoted Kilham, being cast out from the Wesleyan community. They retain all the doctrines and ordinances of Methodism, and, while utterly rejecting all the hierarchal domination which excommunicated their founders, they have adopted a system of church polity nearly identical with our own; the only difference of any moment being that their Conference admits a preponderance of laymen.

The Primitive Wesleyans (confined chiefly to Ireland), who separated from the Wesleyan body in the year 1816 on the church question, retain all the doctrines of Methodism, but have organized themselves under a liberal constitution like our own. Their Conference is composed of preachers and laymen. The Bible Christians, who originated in the year 1818, retain all the doctrines of Methodism, but, rejecting the arbitrary element of the system, have adopted a liberal constitution, admitting the exercise of lay influence and power in a form resembling that of the Methodist New Connexion.

The Protestant Methodists of America, whose founders were cast out from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1828, retain the doctrines and ordinances of Methodism, but have adopted a liberal system, of which lay delegation is a principal element.

The Wesleyan Association, which seceded from the old body in the year 1835, has held fast every doctrine and ordinance of Methodism. It has cast away nothing but the despotic element of the system, and has established a constitution which admits the laity to a share in its administration and legislation.

The Wesleyan Church in America, which, under the intrepid Orange Scott, seceded from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842, on the ground of slavery, retains intact every doctrine of Methodism, and its refreshing ordinances, combined with a liberal system of church government, and its Conferences are composed of an equal number of preachers and laymen.

Mr. Rigg, in his Principles of Wesleyan Methodism, congratulates the Wesleyan body on these secessions as being the occasion of consolidation and strength to the community. For ourselves, we deplore the cause of divisions; but we congratulate mankind on the check which has thus been given to despotic power; and we congratulate our Wesleyan brethren, too, on the accession of some important privileges which had probably never been obtained, but for the struggles of many worthy men who have been excommunicated for their advocacy of the natural and scriptural rights of their fellow-Christians.

But, in reference to the facts before us, we do not ask, What does Mr. Rigg say (for from the tenor of his book we expect no candid verdict), but what do men of sobriety and judgment say, as to the practical lesson which is thereby taught? Here are seven denominations, existing

* We do not use the word despotic or despotism in any offensive sense.

in different parts of the United Kingdom and in America, which have seceded from the Wesleyan body, all of which strenuously maintain every doctrine of Methodism, and all its soul-edifying and profitable means and ordinances, but have each rejected its unscriptural assumptions of priestly authority, and organized a system of lay representation. There must be a reason why the doctrines and ordinances are thus tenaciously and unanimously retained ; and why the system of government is as resolutely and unanimously rejected. Where does that reason lie? Each dissentient offspring replies, The doctrines are retained because they are contained in holy scripture, and the ordinances are enjoined by divine authority, but the system of government is not only unscriptural, but is as repugnant to scripture as it is to man's inalienable rights ; and in this latter decision they are sustained by all denominations but the papal hierarchy and the Wesleyans themselves.

Mr. Rigg refers to the numbers in some of the seceding denominations of Methodism, and tries the *argumentum ad captandum*, by comparing them with the larger numbers of his own denomination. But here he is chargeable with such obvious unfairness as is never found with a candid or truth-loving disputant. If he had wished his readers to form a correct judgment, he would not have suppressed those facts which would lead to a correct decision ; but he has had recourse to this stratagem. He craftily keeps out of sight the vast aggregate of the several seceding denominations, and in adverting, with apparent pleasure, to our limited numbers compared with his own denomination, he omits to tell his readers how our progress was retarded by the calumnies and misrepresentations of his own brethren ; nor does he account for the thousands of our members who, through a change of residence, have been drafted from our ranks, and swelled the numbers of his own. In adverting to an actual decrease we sustained at a certain period, he artfully conceals the fact, that we lost about five thousand members at that time, by contending, not for despotic rule, but for the fundamental doctrines of the cross, and the precious ordinances of religion.

Another attempt to impose upon the judgment of his readers appears in his leaving out the Primitive Methodists from his calculations. The founders of this body were expelled, as well as Mr. Kilham, from the Wesleyans ; they renounce priestly despotism as much as others ; they have adopted a system the most democratical of all the Methodist seceders, and they are the most numerous of all. Why, then, in reckoning our despised hosts, did he omit the mention of this denomination? Mr. Rigg had a special reason for this,—a reason exhibiting more policy than honesty. Had he named the Primitives, he knew the effect it would have in the argument. He knew it would just reverse the conclusion he wished to establish. He knew it would prove, that if increase in number be a test of just principles, as he wished his readers to believe, the increase of the Primitive Methodists would demonstrate that the more democratic the system, the more just is its nature and the more approved of heaven. The fact is this: from about a dozen or two of members in 1811, they had at the last Conference 104,762 members, which is a more rapid increase than that which attended the labours of Mr. Wesley and the first Methodist Preachers in England during the same number of years.

If, therefore, Mr. Rigg wished to induce his readers to draw a conclusion, contrary to the true facts of the case, it was wise in him to conceal the increase of the Primitives, whose system of church government admits to its Conference two laymen to one preacher; and it was equally wise in him to conceal the vast aggregate of the several bodies which have been originated by the despotic polity and government of the parent community.

Notwithstanding Mr. Rigg's supercilious contempt for the numbers of Methodist seceders, they are not very despicable, when all their hosts are fairly computed. Let us glance at them for the year 1850.

Methodist New Connexion	22,062
Primitive Wesleyans	10,420
Bible Christians	15,267
Primitive Methodists	104,762
Protestant Methodists, America	64,313
Wesleyan Association	22,178
Wesleyan Methodist Church, America	20,000
	<hr/>
	259,002

Such, then, is in truth the number comprised in the principal sections of Methodist seceders. Had they but been all consolidated into one denomination, they would have formed a powerful Wesleyan Free Church, and their efficiency and influence would have been vastly greater than they have been or can be in their isolated position. Seeing that each offshoot from Methodism has adopted the great principle of lay representation as the prime element in its system, it is to be deeply deplored that minor differences have not been merged, and all the lesser denominations combined into one powerful phalanx. Perhaps the good Providence of God may yet accomplish this important event, and perhaps the events which are transpiring around us may accelerate its arrival. Meanwhile we hope these several denominations will cherish brotherly affection, and reciprocate kind offices on every possible occasion.

We have been especially struck with the small amount of argument contained in Mr. Rigg's book on Methodism, and the extreme feebleness of that portion which bears the name of argument. It refers much to *Methodistic* law, but little indeed to the law of God. There was a good reason for this. Our impression is, he had no wish for a calm and thorough investigation of the subject of church government, but to bolster up an arbitrary system, and to perpetuate odium towards other sections of Methodism. If Mr. Rigg sincerely wishes for a thorough investigation of the question of church government, let him answer the arguments adduced in this volume, and when his task is finished, we shall be prepared for a rejoinder.

Mr. Rigg's present volume is not a little indebted to Mr. Turner's book on Methodist polity. Not only are Mr. Turner's sophisms reiterated, but even his quotations from Mr. Hulme and Mr. Foster are re-quoted in this book—a plain indication that better matter was absent. However, as Mr. Rigg evinces so much eagerness to sustain a feeble argument by quotations from others, we beg to present him with a document issued and signed by thirteen Wesleyan preachers, at a district meeting held in Nottingham in the year 1796. It was written in reply to an address by a number of lay brethren, who were desirous of a reform in the Methodist system. The preachers who issued this reply were of

some note in the Methodist body, and their sentiments reflect as much honour on their good sense and Christian liberality, as they do of rebuke and censure upon Mr. Rigg's bigotry and intolerance.

"TO MESSRS. HALL, BARLOW, TATHAM, &C.—DEAR BRETHREN,—We feel it our desire to promote, as much as possible, the credit and prosperity of that cause in which we, as ministers of the gospel, are engaged. With this view, we honestly declare our wish that the grievances of which our people complain may meet with the redress of Conference. We only speak the sentiment of our hearts when we say, that we sincerely love the brethren, and feel it the greatest pleasure of our lives to spend and be spent for their present and future advantage; and we are fully persuaded that while we act disinterestedly, we have nothing to fear, but everything to hope. We are happy to find that Mr. Benson has no objection that all preachers should come into connexion with the voice of the people; this, to say nothing of prudence, we consider to be no more than equity and justice will claim. Agreeable to such principles (principles we wish ever to abide by), we further observe, that members of society should be admitted or excluded by a majority of the leaders; that the circuit and society stewards should be the voluntary choice of a majority of our people, together with the preachers; and that all other regulations which concern us (as a religious body), should be grounded on a foundation as lasting as it is just, and as prosperous as it is prudent. We see no reason to object to the admission of delegates from our societies into our district meetings, nor of delegates from our circuits into the Conference, to assist and advise with us in all matters which properly concern them as representatives of the people. As the friends of our common cause, as children of one heavenly Father, as fellow-brethren of Christ Jesus, we entreat you 'pray for us;' that he who governs in Zion may preside over us, and determine in all our councils.—We are, dear brethren, your servants for Christ's sake, THOMAS HANBY, SIMON DAY, JOHN BEAUMONT, THOMAS DUNN, GEORGE SARGEANT, THOMAS GREAVES, J. PENMAN, THOMAS LONGLEY, JONATHAN PARKIN, JOHN ATKINS, JOHN NELSON, GEORGE DERMOT, GEORGE MORLEY."—Nottingham, 1796.

This is an important document, and bears witness to the fact that the above sober-minded ministers did not see any *legal* barrier, nor apprehend any danger to the interests of the church or the prerogatives of the ministry, in the admission of lay representatives to the district meetings and the Conference. Happy would it have been for Methodism had those important measures been conceded at that time.

In page 107, Mr. Rigg says it is *interesting* to see the rival feelings between the New Connexion and the Association. We beg to tell him that the two communities regard each other with cordial affection and respect, and we doubt not they will continue to cherish these sentiments. Were Mr. Rigg's insinuation true, it would not be noble and dignified in him to rejoice in the rival feelings and animosities of two sister communities. "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

While these pages were passing through the press, we received a pamphlet, officially addressed by the Liverpool Circuit to all the circuits in the Wesleyan Association. We enter not into the disputes now unhappily existing in that denomination, but there are two topics in the address which we are bound to notice. One is the friendly recognition which is made of our community; and the other is several important propositions which their community is earnestly called upon to adopt at the next Conference, as improvements in the working of the system.

The friendly recognition, and the desire for a closer fellowship, we sincerely and cordially reciprocate.

The improvements suggested in the Liverpool circular for the future working of the Wesleyan Association, are of a character which would

bring that denomination into a closer resemblance to our own. They are the following:—

“1. That the odious principle of ‘Question by penalty,’ even as ‘explained by the Rev. R. Eckett,’ be repudiated by a special enactment.

“2. That the Magazines and Book-Room be placed under the supervision of a committee.

“3. That the Connexion be divided into districts.”

“5. That all circuits be required, before sending representatives to the Annual Assembly, to comply with the provisions of the Foundation Deed, which stipulates that all circuits seeking admission for their representatives shall consent to take an itinerant ministry, and contribute to the Connexional funds.”

How far the Wesleyan Association in its practical working may at present differ from these principles, we do not feel it to be our province to inquire, as we have no desire to mix ourselves up with any existing controversy on the subjects; but we feel pleasure in stating that, so far as these principles may be adopted and carried out, the resemblance between their system and ours becomes so much nearer to a virtual identity. For,—

First, as to “Question by penalty,” we repudiate it (as before stated) both by law and usage.

Secondly, as to our Book-Room, this is, and always has been, under the management of a committee, who meet monthly for the transaction of business. This is felt to be both satisfactory to the Editor and Steward, and to work efficiently for the concern. Indeed, our Book-Room establishment, within the last fifteen years, has helped the various benevolent objects of the Connexion, by handing over to its funds the sum of £6,526 3s. 5d.

As to the third proposition, the dividing of the Association into districts, this has been adopted by our Connexion for some years, and is found to answer well.

The fourth proposition is one which requires no observation from us; and, as to the fifth proposition, we need only remark that, while all our circuits, without exception, have the privilege of sending representatives to Conference, all, without exception, receive an itinerant ministry, and contribute to the Connexional funds.

It is evident, therefore, that the adoption of the Liverpool propositions would be another step of approximation both to the theory and the practical operation of our system, and so far facilitate an event which many pious and benevolent hearts desire, and which at some period must transpire—the cordial and happy union of the different sections who combine scriptural liberty with the scriptural doctrine and ordinances of Methodism.

From the tenor of this work, it will be seen that we cannot look with indifference on the great struggle which many thousands in the parent community of Methodists are now maintaining for *religious* freedom; but it would be premature and indecorous in us to be present than that, so far as any men contend in a Christian cause, great principles, and great principles *alone*, they have our sympathy, and our earnest prayers for their success.

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